DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 026 360 TE 000 928

By-Marckwardt, Albert H., Ed.

Language and Language Learning: Papers Relating to the Anglo-American Seminar on the Teaching of English (Dartmouth College, New Hampshire, 1966). The Dartmouth Seminar Papers.

Modern Language Association of America, New York, N.Y.; National Association for the Teaching of English (England).; National Council of Teachers of English, Champaign, Ill.

Pub Date 68

Note-81p.

Available from-National Council of Teachers of English, 508 South Sixth Street, Champaign, Ill. 61820 (Stock No. 25653, HC $1.50).

EDRS Price MF-$0.50 HC Not Available from EDRS.

Descriptors-Applied Linguistics, Attitudes, *English Instruction, Inservice Teacher Education, *Language, Language Development, Language Instruction, Language Proficiency, Language Programs, *Language Standardization, Language Teachers, Language Usage, Learning, *Linguistics, Modern Language Curriculum, Nonstandard Dialects, Second Language Learning, *Teacher Education

Identifiers-*Anglo-American Seminar on the Teaching of English, Dartmouth Seminar

This collection of five papers from the Anglo-American Seminar on the Teaching of English deals with language standards, common attitudes toward language, the relationship between linguistics and the teaching of English, and the linguistic component of the preparation of the English teacher. Albert H. Marckwardt surveys the history of language standards, presents the respective views of the English teacher and the linguist on standard English, and attempts to show how each can benefit from understanding the other's viewpoint. David Mackay emphasizes the need for the English teacher to relate standard English to the student's personal dialect, and to guide him in understanding and mastering the most appropriate forms. John M. Sinclair considers what the English teacher needs to know about linguistics and what types of linguistic system would be most valuable to teachers in describing the language. Joshua Fishman points out that because mot Americans have some cultural roots in languages other than English, their sensitiveness to these languages should be taken into account by the teacher of English. The last paper, the final report of the joint working party and study group, presents seven main issues that must be dealt with in any discussion of teacher education and language learning. (LH)

ED026360

$1.50

# LANGUAGE AND LANGUAGE LEARNING



ALBERT H. MARCKWARDT

EDITOR

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THE DARTMOUTH SEMINAR PAPERS

# LANGUAGE AND LANGUAGE LEARNING

## THE DARTMOUTH SEMINAR STUDY GROUP ON LINGUISTICS AND THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH

Frederic G. Cassidy, Chairman, University of Wisconsin
W. Nelson Francis, Brown University
Charles Muscatine, University of California, Berkeley
David Mackay, University College, London
John Sinclair, University of Birmingham
Alfred H. Grommon, Stanford University

## WORKING PARTY ON STANDARDS AND ATTITUDES TOWARD LANGUAGE

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# LANGUAGE AND LANGUAGE LEARNING

papers relating to
the Anglo-American Seminar
on the Teaching of English
at
Dartmouth College, New Hampshire
1966

edited by

ALBERT H. MARCKWARDT

for
Modern Language Association of America
National Association for the Teaching of English (U. K.)
and
National Council of Teachers of English

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH
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**Library of Congress Catalog Card Number:** 68-58713
**SBN Number:** 8141-25653
**NCTE Stock Number:** 25653

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# FOREWORD TO THE SERIES

The Anglo-American Seminar on the Teaching of English was cosponsored by the National Association for the Teaching of English in the United Kingdom, the Modern Language Association of America, and the National Council of Teachers of English in the United States. Supported by funds from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, it met at Dartmouth College in August and September of 1966. Recommendations of the entire Seminar have been reported in two major volumes: *The Uses of English* by Herbert J. Muller (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1967) and *Growth Through English* by John Dixon (Reading, England: NATE, 1967; available in North America from MLA and NCTE).

This publication is one in the following series of six monographs presenting papers, summaries of discussion, and related materials being published for the cosponsoring associations by the National Council of Teachers of English.

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|---|---|
| *Creativity in English* | Geoffrey Summerfield, editor |
| *Drama in the English Classroom* | Douglas Barnes, editor |
| *The Uses of Myth* | Paul Olson, editor |
| *Sequence in Continuity* | Arthur Eastman, editor |
| *Language and Language Learning* | Albert H. Marckwardt, editor |
| *Response to Literature* | James R. Squire, editor |

# PREFACE

Of the five working parties and eight study groups which constituted the consultative apparatus of the Dartmouth Seminar, two dealt directly with language problems. Working Party No. 5 was concerned with standards and attitudes toward language. To Study Group No. 8 was assigned the relationship between linguistics and the teaching of English and also the question of the linguistic component of the preparation of the English teacher.

About midway through the four-week Seminar session, the two groups joined forces. They felt, quite correctly, that the two topics had so much in common that to try to treat them separately would result in waste and duplication of effort. The present publication reflects the same conclusion. It consists of edited versions of the basic papers presented to and produced by the two groups.

In keeping with the general practice of the Seminar, an initial working party paper was distributed to the entire membership of the Seminar in advance of the opening session. Then at a plenary meeting devoted to that topic, someone from the opposite side of the Atlantic opened the discussion with a fairly extended comment. In this instance, since the working paper had been prepared by an American (A. H. Marckwardt), it fell to the lot of David Mackay to present the response. The opening paper and response constitute the first two items in the current collection.

Early in their deliberations, the members of Study Group No. 8 felt it necessary to arrive at some basic definitions and to clarify certain concepts dealing not only with language but with the student and teacher as well. These definitions and concepts form the basis of the third paper, by John M. Sinclair. During the course of the Seminar, the members had the opportunity to listen to and confer with a number of consultants representing areas of specialization

bearing upon the topics under consideration. One of them was Dr. Joshua Fishman, a pioneer in the relatively new field of sociolinguistics. His paper on "The Breadth and Depth of English in the United States" has been included for the light it throws on a subject which has too often been neglected by the English-teaching profession. The volume concludes with the final report of the joint working party and study group. In essence it summarizes the results of their four weeks of deliberation, presenting their view of the principal issues in the teaching of the native language, in a trenchant and thought-provoking manner.

A.H.M.

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# LANGUAGE STANDARDS AND ATTITUDES

Albert H. Marckwardt

A considerable amount of research over the past seventy-five years has been devoted to demonstrating that the concept of a single monolithic standard of Good English is untenable in theory and not in accord with fact. Carried on for the most part by philologists and linguists, these efforts have had something of a dual impact upon the English-teaching profession, and this in turn has given rise to a variety of reactions on the part of the public. I think it reasonable to say that, in the United States at least, we have not yet reached a comfortable resolution of the problem of linguistic standards, largely because reactions to the conclusions of scholars have become so charged with emotion that rational and broadly informed discussion has at times become difficult. Consequently, there is still a polarization of position within the profession, even though the numbers of those maintaining one point of view as over against the other may have shifted somewhat during the past two or three decades. Certainly, the question of standards of language and attitudes toward language must be faced with candor and with as broad a perspective as time and space will permit.

One of the components of such a perspective is an understanding of the context in which certain ideas about language and language usage have been presented. Since the research mentioned at the outset has been conducted chiefly during the present century, the year 1900 will serve as a convenient point of departure. It was a time when the total enrollment in all the colleges and universities in the United States amounted to very little more than 250,000 and constituted only 4 percent of the population with ages ranging from 18 to 21. There were 630,000 students in the secondary schools, both public and private, representing no more than 10 percent of those in the appropriate age group. In short, one youth out of ten was attending high school; one young person out of twenty-five was in college. Although among this restricted population there were undoubtedly some children of sharecroppers, factory workers, and recent immigrants pulling themselves up socially by their bootstraps, the vast majority of the students must have come from homes where Standard English was the normal vehicle of communication. The problem of superimposing the prestige dialect of the language upon that which represented the linguistic heritage of the lower middle or working class student was minor, if indeed it existed at all.

What, then, went on in the high school and college English classroom? Chiefly the reading and discussion of literature and the periodic writing of essays. The essays, moreover, were written according to models which made up the bulk of the textbooks of rhetoric at the time. Such popular texts as Genung's *Practical Elements of Rhetoric*, Hart's *Manual of Composition and Rhetoric*, and Hill's *Beginnings of Rhetoric and Composition* devoted relatively little space either to a formal presentation of grammar or to specific items of usage. These matters were the responsibility of the elementary schools, which already included a very high percentage of the eligible school children of the country. In them the problem of native language instruction was necessarily quite different in character.

Remedial instruction in the native language was clearly an elementary school function. A knowledge of grammar, the ability to parse a sentence, and later to diagram it, were the means of achieving this aim. The preferred model for the common school grammar was Lindley Murray's *Grammar of the English Language Adapted to the Different Classes of Learners,* which went through some two hundred editions. It was written in 1795 and reflected the authoritarian tradition characteristic of the eighteenth century grammarians (as distinct from the rhetoricians) in England. Murray, trained as a lawyer and successful as a business man, had no philological preparation, nor did most of his competitors for the American elementary school textbook market. Consequently their books reflected nothing of the new perspectives in language study which were developing as the result of the work of such scholars as Rask in Denmark, Grimm in Germany, Furnivall, Trench, and Hartley Coleridge in England, and William Dwight Whitney in the United States. Even so, as H. A. Gleason has remarked, "The grammarians were probably. . .on the average more open-minded on the matter of grammar and usage than the general public, and in particular than the poorly trained teachers and school boards that chose the books."[1]*

Books on language written for the general public in the United States were even more rigid and unyielding in their attitudes than the elementary school grammars, but like them were efforts of the untrained amateur. A. M. Tibbetts has reminded us that L. P. Meredith, the author of *Every-Day Errors of Speech,* held the degrees of M.D. and D.D.S. and was also the author of a possibly more helpful and authoritative treatise on *The Teeth and How to Save Them.*[2]

One of the most popular of the books for the layman was *Words and Their Uses* by Richard Grant White, which appeared in 1870. White, highly urbane and polished, was the author of musical criticism, studies on Shakespeare,

*Notes are printed at the ends of chapters.

and political satire. He has been described as snobbish, witty, influential, and often unsound. He seems to have been wholly without academic training in language, unless he derived something by osmosis as a consequence of his friendship with Francis James Child. Some idea of the temper of his linguistic judgments may be gained from his characterization of the word *practicioner* as abnormal and indefensible, and his condemnation of *presidential, tangential,* and *exponential* as "a trinity of monsters which, although they have not been lovely in their lives, should yet in their death not be divided." He carried on the tradition of certain of the eighteenth century grammarians by recognizing a law higher than mere usage. His work found a ready market in post-Civil War America and remained in print until the 1930's.

Thus, at the turn of the century there was, in books intended for the lay public and for elementary school children, a continuation of the language attitudes and the rigid prescriptivism characteristic of the age of Samuel Johnson. This was not the case in the high schools and colleges, where the students represented only a minority of the population and were presumed to be linguistically competent. Here the focus was upon rhetoric rather than grammar and usage, and the textbooks, following Campbell and Blair, enunciated the Horatian doctrine of use as the sole arbiter and norm of speech. In the past this distinction has too often gone unrecognized in the heated arguments over the merits of the prescriptive and descriptive approaches.

There is still a third force to be considered, the professional philologists, academically highly competent, who had developed year by year a substantial body of knowledge on the history and structure of English, as well as of the other modern languages. With them the doctrine of usage was not a hypothesis; it was a conclusion derived from their examination of the relevant facts about the development of Standard English. As early as 1879, Professor Thomas R. Lounsbury of Yale University had written in his *History of the English Language*:

> . . . the history of language when looked at from the purely grammatical point of view, is little less than the history of corruptions. . . .But it is equally true that these grammatical changes, or corruptions. . .have had no injurious effects upon the development of language. It is at the present time a fashion to talk of our speech as being in some ways less pure than it was in the days of Alfred. But the test of any tongue is not the grammatical or linguistic resources it may be supposed to possess; it is the use which it makes of the resources which it does possess. . .for it is a lesson which many learn with difficulty, and some never learn at all, that purism is not purity.[3]

There is evidence to support the belief that language usage was a matter of concern to the academic community at this time. At the 1899 meeting of the Modern Language Association, the presidential address, delivered by Professor H. C. A. von Jagemann, was entitled "Philology and Purism." He concerned himself with the dilemma of the linguistic scholar who, in his function as scientist and historian, was bound to recognize the present and past force of usage in shaping the language, but who, in the role of grammarian or teacher, could not escape dealing with matters of propriety and correctness. Read in the light of the present day, the paper turns out to be a strange mixture of those beliefs about language and its development which are generally accepted as linguistically sound today, and of a series of value judgments and prescriptive attitudes which we should be quite as firmly disposed to question. Von Jagemann recognized the importance of the spoken language. He warned against overrating the authority of the great writers of past generations—or even the present. He advised that, in instances of divided usage, the one most in keeping with the prevailing tendencies of the language was to be preferred. He realized that American English would inevitably have to develop its own distinctive forms and modes of expression. Two years later, Professor Edward S. Sheldon, in another presidential message to that organization, dealt with the same problem with a comparable clarity of historical and linguistic perspective and the same apprehensions as to the practical consequences. What is

interesting in both instances, however, is the modernity of the general approach to language on the part of these academics, decades before such matters became an issue in connection with the teaching of English in the schools.

It is evident then that most of the elements which loom large in the present conflict over what constitutes an acceptable and a workable language program for the schools were already present in some measure in 1900. The intervening years have brought a further development and refinement of those principles and attitudes widely held by people professionally engaged in the systematic study of language, a continued resistance to them (and indeed a fear of their consequences) on the part of persons nurtured on the ideas about language current at the lay or popular level, a breakdown of communication, a plethora of arguments at cross purposes (appealing to the emotions rather than reason), and above all, a significant change in the makeup of the school population.

By 1920 the enrollments of the secondary schools in the United States had quadrupled the figure for 1900, and by 1930 they were almost nine times greater, even though the total population had increased by less than two thirds of its 1900 figure. In 1930 over 50 percent of the children in the age group from 14 to 17 were in the secondary schools, five times the percentage for 1900. More and more students were going on to college—possibly one in ten by 1930, as compared with one in twenty-five at the turn of the century. An inevitable consequence of this increase was a shift in responsibility for the establishment of what came to be called "the decencies," from the elementary to the secondary schools. No longer could the high school teacher depend upon the home environment to establish and reinforce competence in the use of Standard English. The secondary school classrooms now included children from both sides of the railroad tracks, and English teaching necessarily had to assume a remedial function. These changes were reflected in the colleges as well, especially those which, for one reason or another, were unable or

unwilling to establish rigorous standards for admission.

In the course of time the textbooks of rhetoric, which had been the staple of the high school and college classroom, were replaced by handbooks of composition. Woolley first appeared on the scene in 1907; the *Century* in 1920. These reflected a shift in emphasis from rhetorical nicety to linguistic propriety, and they were soon accompanied by auxiliary workbooks which permitted but one correct response to any of the linguistic quandaries they propounded. Concurrently, the emerging philosophy of educational empiricism fortified by the results of some pedagogical research discredited the effectiveness of the teaching of grammar as a means of developing correct language habits in the young. What came to be called "functional grammar" replaced the earlier comprehensive treatment of the subject, shifting the focus of attention upon details rather than system. The net results of this shift of emphasis have been described by H. A. Gleason:

> Language is a system (or a complex of systems). Its grammar must be systematic to be meaningful. Bits and pieces cannot be taught or omitted at will simply because they are judged individually useful or not. As items are dropped the system falls apart. . . . The experience of the schools with "functional grammar" has confirmed that random teaching cannot work. The more grammar is cut, the less successful is the teaching of the remainder. The more disconnected the facts, the more difficult they are to teach. "Functional grammar" with its emphasis on errors is self-defeating. It is tantamount to the elimination of grammar—simply a longer slower process to that end.[4]

Thus, in the course of twenty-five years, the changes in the school population had made it necessary for the secondary schools and even the colleges to assume a large share of responsibility for the development of native-language competence. The kinds of textbooks and the approach to grammar reflected the change. For a number of reasons teachers were not at all well prepared to cope with the new situation. For one thing, their professional training included little or no work in the structure or history of the language. It was not until 1927 that the National Council

of Teachers of English even appointed a committee to consider the matter,[5] and by that time the Modern Language Association had completely divested itself of all pedagogical concerns. In addition the teachers, as a rule, came from nonacademic, nonprofessional backgrounds. For them school teaching was a step upwards in the social scale. As H. L. Mencken trenchantly but unsympathetically described the situation in 1922:

> Thus the youth of civilized upbringing feels that it would be stooping a bit to take up the rattan. But the plow-hand obviously makes a step upward, and is hence eager for the black gown. . . . There was a time when the typical American professor came from a small area in New England, and even of a certain austere civilization. But today he comes from the region of silos, revivals, and saleratus. Behind him there is absolutely no tradition of aristocratic aloofness and urbanity.[6]

This was overstated, of course, but it does suggest that as far as any degree of sophistication about language was concerned, the teachers, by virtue of background, inadequacy of preparation, and the immediate task before them, were more likely to find satisfaction and a kindred spirit in Richard Grant White than in Thomas Lounsbury. It is largely this which has caused so much difficulty in arriving at some agreement upon linguistic standards and attitudes in the schools of the United States.

At the same time that these changes were taking place, scholars were accumulating more and more knowledge about the history of English. The *Oxford English Dictionary* was pressing toward completion. Publications of the Early English Text Society were appearing steadily, increasing the amount of primary material available to the scholar. Lounsbury's work on the history of English was followed by the work of Emerson, Joseph Wright, and, later, Henry Cecil Wyld. Albert S. Cook of Yale was responsible for some two score linguistic dissertations. A new generation of competent American phoneticians was emerging. Abroad, such scholars as Henry Sweet and Otto Jespersen were experimenting with new concepts in English grammar.

This exciting activity in the field of language study, of which only a very small part has been mentioned, resulted in a further refinement and extension of the body of linguistic concepts which had been generally accepted by scholars at the turn of the century. As this extension and complication went on, the gap between the linguistic scholars and the popular notions embodied in the school textbook widened. Despite the best efforts of such men as Charles C. Fries, Sterling A. Leonard, and their successors, the scholar's concept of the linguistic standard is not yet fully comprehended, and his general view of language, his attitude toward it, is still alien to many who deal on a practical level with language in the schools.

Misconceptions about the scholar's view of usage are a case in point, and it is not at all surprising that they should have arisen. In itself the Horatian dictum that "use is the sole arbiter and norm of speech" is not especially helpful. It neither identifies the user nor suggests a solution for situations where usage is not uniform. George Campbell's characterization, "national, reputable, and present," satisfactory on two counts perhaps, still begs the question as to what constitutes reputability. One answer to this came from Fitzedward Hall, the self-trained and highly capable antagonist of Richard Grant White and all that he stood for. His characterization, "the usage of the best writers and speakers," still appears frequently in school textbooks.

To the inquisitive scholars this was not a wholly satisfactory definition. It presented at least two difficulties. What they realized and what the schoolmen, the classroom teachers, the school textbook writers so frequently overlooked was the extent to which the usage of the best writers could and did vary. Lounsbury had made this point as early as 1904 in *The Standard of Pronunciation in English* when he wrote that, "Pronunciation must and will vary widely among persons of equal intelligence and cultivation,"[7] and he said virtually the same thing about grammar three years later in *The Standard of Usage in English*. In 1917, J. Lesslie Hall in his *English Usage*

gleefully amassed and cited hundreds of instances of the employment of questioned or disputed usages from the works of standard authors. The preface of the second (1934) edition of *Webster's New International Dictionary* cited statements from six reputable authorities on the English language, all questioning the feasibility and the existence of a single, infallible, and permanent standard.[8]

The other question which presented itself was whether the usage of men of letters had in fact constituted the basis of Standard English as it had developed in the course of its history. A detailed examination of the emergence of and changes in standard language, not only English but others as well, lent support to the suspicion that cause and effect had been mistaken for each other. The studies of Morsbach, Flasdieck, and others led to the conclusion that fourteenth century London English had formed the basis of the standard language because London was the political, economic, social, and cultural center of the country, and that subsequent changes in the standard reflected such factors as population shifts and changes in the power structure. Chaucer, it was pointed out, wrote in London English because it was the standard, as did his contemporaries Gower and Wycliffe, who had not been born in the London area. This gave rise to a new kind of definition of the standard language, based upon social utility rather than literary tradition.

This new emphasis found expression in the midtwenties in statements such as that by George Philip Krapp, to the effect that "A sufficient definition of the term standard will perhaps be found in the statement that speech is standard when it passes current in actual use among persons who must be accounted among the conservers and representatives of the approved social traditions in a community."[9] Two years later, Charles C. Fries commented in much the same vein: "As a practical program for the schools in their teaching, we have suggested a limiting of their consideration to the particular usage of those who are carrying on the affairs of the English-speaking people."[10]

However soundly based and logically justified these new concepts of the linguistic standard may have been, they provided cold comfort for the English teacher in an American classroom. In England one could at least assume, as Nancy Mitford (or really Alan S. C. Ross) did as late as 1956, that "it is solely by its language that the upper class is clearly marked off from the others." But there were too many American communities where those who carried on the affairs on the local level were uncomfortably reminiscent of the devastating portraits by Sinclair Lewis in *Main Street* and *Babbitt*. Was this the kind of language to which they were to commit themselves? Krapp's statement that "the best national speech for a democracy is that which enables it to be most fully self-expressive" caused them to wonder if this might be the language of an Alfred E. Smith, or later, that of a Dwight Eisenhower. For them, a standard based upon social utility did not provide the values they felt they needed. Nor has this issue been completely resolved even today, although the presentation of usage in school texts is more realistic than it used to be.

Beginning in the late 1920's, linguistic scholarship turned its attention, at least in part, from the past to the present state of the language. A number of surveys of usage were undertaken, beginning with the study by S. A. Leonard, which was to culminate in the monograph *Current English Usage* in 1932. A decade later Charles C. Fries's *American English Grammar* made its contribution to the technique of the linguistic survey by using such objective, nonlinguistic data as education and occupation to classify the informants, thus avoiding the pitfall of circularity in classifying them on the basis of the language they employed. Specific items of usage were reported in countless articles in the learned journals. Ultimately, in the 1950's, the *Dictionary of Contemporary American Usage,* by Bergen and Cornelia Evans, and Margaret Bryant's *Current American Usage* provided reasonably reliable syntheses of the research on usage which had been carried on during the preceding two decades. The same kind of information has been available

in both the second and third editions of *Webster's New International Dictionary.*

Not everyone has been happy with the result. The most vocal dissent, however, has come from those members of college and university English departments whose principal concern is instruction in composition and literature, rather than from secondary school teachers. One frequent charge is that the evidence of current usage has been doctored, or at least that it has not been properly evaluated. This is implicit in a title such as "Dr. Kinsey and Professor Fries" (by John C. Sherwood)[11] and explicit in Sheridan Baker's statement that "the linguists have long wanted to see *ain't* grow respectable, to show the schoolmarm a thing or two, to champion the native language of 'the people,' and to supply an awkward gap in the paradigm of *isn't.*"[12]

The traditionalist—and I use the term here without pejorative overtones—is not likely to be impressed when he learns that Addison, Steele, Defoe, Richardson, Coleridge, Carlyle, and Thackeray, not to mention another half dozen authors of the first rank, employed *different than* some 15 percent of the time. To him this merely serves to prove that Coleridge and Thackeray as well as Homer can nod; he is by no means persuaded that nodding should be condoned. And admittedly some of the articles on usage, particularly in the thirties, did convey the feeling that their authors were having an inordinate amount of fun kicking over ashcans. William R. Bowden's statement that the ordinary English teacher is a humanist by inclination and training is very much to the point here. "This does not mean," he goes on to say, "that his attitude is antiscientific, but it is antibehaviorist. He is committed to a faith in man's moral, political, and social autonomy; and his subject matter includes not only what *is* but what he thinks ought to be."[13]

Can there be a resolution of these conflicting points of view? I believe there can, but there must also be something of an enlarging of the mind on both sides. First of all, the reports of the surveys must be read by the traditionalists more carefully than they have been in the past, and all of

the pertinent evidence must be examined. In the logomachia over the third edition of Webster, Dr. Gove and his associates were criticized time after time for dictionary entries which merely repeated what was already in the second. Readers must learn to look behind the reported conclusions to the nature of the evidence. I know of few teachers, for example, who ever consult the tabulated summary sheets of the Leonard study, *Current English Usage,* yet those tables are very often germane and can throw considerable light on the brief summaries in the body of the report.

Those who have conducted usage studies have been especially culpable on two scores. They have far too often contented themselves merely with a nose count, a quantitative measurement given in the simplest terms. Until very recently, for example, accounts of the split infinitive were limited to demonstrating the age of the construction and enumerating the authors who had employed it. There was little or no attempt to distinguish the situations where a split infinitive avoided ambiguity from those in which it did not. In fact, I have not yet seen a full-scale treatment of all the syntactic patterns which the construction assumes. Until this is done, the language analyst has not rendered all the assistance of which he is capable. The same might be said of the indefinite pronouns with respect to their agreement with verbs and pronoun antecedents.

A second shortcoming in many of the usage studies is their failure to report the attitude toward various types of constructions as well as the incidence of their use. The feeling about *ain't* is just as much a part of the linguistic record as is the fact that certain persons of culture, chiefly of the older generation—and I have encountered some—use it unabashedly in the first person negative interrogative. This kind of attitude study has two uses. It will identify certain shibboleths that the teacher of composition will balk at, no matter what the record of usage is. If attitude is broadened to include blockages or structural taboos, we may arrive at a better understanding of certain developments in the language. I think it reasonable to

suppose that the reluctance of many Americans to employ *mayn't* and *oughtn't* accounts in part for the frequent substitution of *can* for *may* on the one hand, and the employment of *hadn't ought* on the other.

Improvement in the technique for reporting usage, important as this may be, is but a fraction of the problem. There are certain wholly defensible concepts of language, widely held by philologists and linguists for decades, which could be of positive, though perhaps indirect, assistance to the classroom teacher. Unfortunately these have not always been clearly explained, and in the heat of recent controversy they have often come under attack.

Foremost among these is the relationship between spoken and written English. "I simply reassert a belief that has prevailed for centuries—until the new linguists came along about 30 years ago," writes Sheridan Baker, "when I say that the written language is more valuable than the spoken. Our books hold man's intellect and spirit more durably than stone, as Shakespeare and many others have observed. The written language is the best we can do. Its durability, precision, beauty, and downright necessity are so obvious that most laymen are dumbfounded when they hear the linguist chanting 'spoken language is the language'."[14] Much of this is true; more of it is beside the point. Most of it arises from misunderstanding.

Experience with attempting to describe the structure of literally hundreds of languages has taught the linguist to look at the spoken language for what it may reveal of the essential organization and structure. Some details of the structure of English are totally concealed in the written language: the variation in the pronunciation of the definite article, for example, whereas the identical pattern in the indefinite article is fully revealed. Stress as a determinant of part-of-speech function, as in *ob'ject* (noun) as opposed to *object'* (verb), is not shown at all. The phonetic patterning of the regular noun plural and genitive singular inflection is suggested only in part by the spelling. Admittedly, these are not matters of grave concern to the teacher whose job

it is to get his students to write acceptable compositions, but they are basic to the essential structure of the language, and this does fall within the proper purview of the grammarian.

As far as the novelty of the idea is concerned, Henry Sweet wrote in the Preface of his *New English Grammar,* "It is now generally recognized, except in hopelessly obscurantist circles, that phonology is the foundation of all linguistic study, whether practical or scientific." This was seventy-five years ago, and judging from the context, the idea was not new in his time.

Where the linguists are patently open to criticism is in their failure to provide contrastive studies of the structure of spoken and written English, particularly with respect to syntax. In addition to just the words, inflections, and patterns of arrangement, speech does make use of the additional resources of stress, intonation, and pause—features which are reflected in the writing system rather clumsily at best. Moreover the speaker can and does shift structure as he goes along, or, if he wishes, he can break off and start over again. To compensate for the loss of these resources, the written language must necessarily be organized with a greater regard for logic. Modifying elements must be adjacent to their headwords; antecedent relationships must avoid ambiguity. What has not been studied sufficiently is the employment of structures in written English which occur rarely or not at all, or under quite different circumstances, in the spoken language. A perceptive treatment of such matters would be a help in the teaching of composition and might conceivably provide a useful tool for stylistic analysis.

No linguist competently versed in the history of English would question the assertion that Shakespeare and the Authorized Version of the Bible have influenced the speech and writing of millions during the last three centuries. But the same linguist would also be likely to remember H. C. Wyld's careful demonstration of the extent to which the easy and cultivated prose of such seventeenth century

writers as Suckling, Cowley, and Dryden derived from the speech of the period, to say nothing of Wyld's conclusion that "the style of literary prose is alive and expressive chiefly in so far as it is rooted in that of colloquial utterance."[15] To suppose that the relationship of the spoken and written language from period to period has been anything but reciprocal would seem to be the height of naiveté.

Wyld was here using the term *colloquial* in its technical and etymological sense. That it has come to mean something quite different is traceable in part to the classroom attitude which viewed the spoken language as a corrupted and imprecise form of written English. That this has happened is understandable. The composition teacher's primary concern has been with written English. The recent recognition in the United States that it is the business of the schools to prepare the students in oral English as well has been viewed with suspicion as an entering wedge for teachers and departments of speech, considered by the English-teaching fraternity as somehow belonging to a lower and less respectable academic order. Consequently, many English teachers have accepted and acted upon the dubious assumption that instruction in careful writing would carry over into the student's spoken language. This has had the inevitable and unhappy result that for millions of boys and girls, schoolroom English is something quite apart from the way in which they normally communicate.

Here the classroom teachers should have been alert to the fundamental distinction made by John Kenyon in 1948 between functional varieties (formal and informal) and levels of usage (standard and substandard) in the language.[16] This would have saved us from some of the worst of the confusion. We would have been better off still had we recognized, as J. R. Firth and more recently Martin Joos have done, that a scale of styles exists in all our use of English, and that each of the various styles displays characteristic features of diction and structure. I find it difficult to believe that a recognition of these complexities of linguistic behavior, if they are systematically arrived at

and soundly reported, must necessarily lead to a relativism which implicitly denies all values. I readily concede that teachers have not been prepared to think along these lines, but this should not bar improvement in the future.

Certainly one of the problems facing the linguist is to furnish a convincing demonstration that his contribution to the teaching of the native language can be something other than negative. On the surface he has often seemed to substitute a permissive and relativistic attitude for the old certainties and verities. This has come about partly because he has tried to replace folklore with fact, and at times the factual record differs materially from what we have thought it to be. He has also, as in the distinction between level and functional variety, introduced subtlety into an area which once seemed simple; and most of us prefer simple to subtle answers—except in our own specialties.

Part of the difficulty, I am convinced, has arisen from the misinterpretation of statements made by linguists in connection with the entire spectrum of human communication. Some of these have been read as if they applied specifically and only to those segments of the language with which the schools are concerned. The last of the five basic concepts of language behavior set forth in the NCTE publication *The English Language Arts* (1952) is a case in point. It reads, "All usage is relative." On the surface this seems to be a total abandonment of excellence, of even the concept of a standard. But what does the linguist mean when he speaks of relativity in this connection?

To me it is quite evident that he is speaking in terms of the purpose of a message considered in the light of the total situation in which it is uttered. Here "total situation" would include such factors as the geographical area in which the language is used, the age, education, and social standing of speaker and hearer, the nature of the medium (speech or writing), the emotional tone, and any number of other matters. Considered in these terms, usage is relative. "A reel of cotton" may be an impeccable expression in Britain, but there is no point in my using the term at

Bamberger's in Princeton! It simply will not produce the desired result, any more than if I were to tell one of my students to "revise" the third act of *Othello.* And relativity, so interpreted, applies as well to all the aspects of communication which have been mentioned. The language employed in addressing a public meeting differs from that used in the family circle at the breakfast table, or at least I hope it does.

Unfortunately relativism has been taken to mean that we have no grounds for preferring one usage to another. There are at least two which no linguist would question. The first is the likelihood of its conveying the message and producing the desired effect in the person who is addressed —a functional and, in some sense, a rehetorical consideration. The second is its conformity to the canons of acceptability in level, functional variety, and style of language appropriate to the particular situation. As far as the English classroom is concerned, this amounts principally to formal written English and to what Joos characterizes as the consultative style in the spoken language.[17] These canons of acceptability are matters of linguistic fact and attitude. They can be and have been collected and codified.

When I try to justify a preference for one form over another on any other basis, I find myself in difficulties. Let us take the current tendency to substitute *like* for *as* as a subordinating conjunction as a case in point. A reasonably reliable record of usage informs me that it appears rarely or not at all in formal written English, but that its incidence in spoken English, especially of the informal variety, is much higher. I am also aware that many persons dislike the construction. I do not use it myself, either in speech or writing, and consequently would not defend it out of personal preference.

I know that historically it originated as an ellipsis of *like as,* and that it appeared as early as 1530; it cannot therefore be dismissed as a recent solecism. I know also that in spoken English it often appears when a speaker changes constructions as he speaks. He begins to say,

"John looks very much like his father," and he may end up with, "John looks very much like his father did twenty years ago." In the light of cold reason I find it difficult to argue against it on the ground of change of function, first of all because English words have changed function frequently, some only after considerable resistance, and others without having caused a ripple. More specifically, how can I condemn the dual function of *like* as preposition and subordinating conjunction in the face of *but,* which performs as both preposition and coordinating conjunction? One was an adjective in origin, the other an adverb. With these *a priori* grounds failing me, I am thrown back to the record of its current usage and the attitude toward it.

How do I apply this in the classroom? Take an uncompromising stand against it, try to distinguish between use in speech and writing, ignore it, or try to assign a priority to it in a hierarchy of problems to be treated? My preference would be for the latter. Believing as I do that language habits can be changed only as a consequence of the expenditure of considerable time and effort, I must ask myself if my students would be better served if more attention were devoted to eliminating the multiple negative construction and the confusion between *lie* and *lay,* both of them more blatant instances of nonstandard language. And my answer, of course, would depend upon the extent to which they tend to make the latter errors. Viewed in one way, this could, I suppose, be called relativism. From another point of view it might be characterized as a judicious selection of alternatives or establishment of priorities.

Here, many of our answers will depend on the view that we take of the entire process of language learning. With respect to this, the linguist has tended to focus upon the child's early years. A typical statement of the linguist's position is to be found in *A Course in Modern Linguistics* by Charles F. Hockett:

> By the age of four to six the normal child is a *linguistic adult.* He controls, with marginal exceptions if any, the phonemic sys-

> tem of his language; he handles effortlessly the grammatical core; he knows and uses the basic contentive vocabulary of the language. Of course there is a vast further vocabulary of contentives that he does not know, but this continues to some extent throughout his life. He may get tangled in trying to produce longer discourses, as in describing the activities of a morning at school, but clarity in extended exposition is a point on which older people also vary greatly.[18]

Again, as was the case with linguistic relativism, the linguist and the teacher in the English classroom are concerned with quite different aspects of language learning. There is little reason to question the accuracy of Hockett's statement, particularly if one places the proper interpretation upon *grammatical core* and does not read it to mean "the grammar of the standard language in complete detail." The recent research of Ruth Strickland and of Walter Loban supports Hockett's conclusion about early acquisition of the basic patterns. But "the further vocabulary of contentives" and "clarity in extended exposition," relegated to a subordinate position in what Hockett has to say, are the principal concerns of the composition teacher, and properly so. Moreover, as long as the grammatical core which the child has acquired is the core of Standard English, there is no problem, but if it is the core of a nonprestigious social or regional dialect, it is quite another matter.

Yet there is something of value in the linguist's view of language acquisition. It does alert the teacher to the strength and origin of the language patterns he encounters in his students. It causes him to realize that more than a shotgun corrective technique will be required to change them. It should demonstrate to him that the concept of original sin, linguistically speaking, is untenable; children are not born with an innate tendency toward multiple negation or the lack of agreement between subject and verb. It should also suggest to him that he must find a way of teaching the standard forms without stigmatizing those which represent the folk speech of the community. To repeat a point made earlier, he will have to establish

priorities in what he regards as acceptable in view of the possibility that he may encounter many more deviations from the standard than he will be able to correct. Yet, though tempered with a sense of flexibility, enlightened by an understanding of linguistic process, the concept of a standard must emerge. The linguist can do much in employing his knowledge of the language positively toward this end, but in order to achieve it, he must make himself understood, and the English-teaching profession must exert the necessary effort to understand what he says, and what he means when he says it.

**Notes**

1. H. A. Gleason, Jr., *Linguistics and English Grammar* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1965), p. 75.
2. A. M. Tibbetts, "The Real Issues in the Great Language Controversy," *English Journal*, 55 (January 1966), 28.
3. T. R. Lounsbury, *History of the English Language* (NewYork: H. Holt and Company, 1879), pp. 351-353. O.P.
4. Gleason, *Linguistics and English Grammar*, p. 15.
5. The composition of the committee is of some historical interest. It consisted of Samuel Moore (chairman), W. F. Bryan, C. C. Fries, J. S. Kenyon, T. A. Knott, R. L. Ramsay, L. L. Rockwell, and J. F. Royster.
6. H. L. Mencken, *Prejudices: Third Series* (1922), p. 254. O.P. [James T. Farrell (ed.); New York: Random House, Vintage Books, 1958.]
7. T. R. Lounsbury, *The Standard of Pronunciation in English* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1904), p. 212. O.P.
8. These included Daniel Jones, A. Lloyd James, Samuel Moore, George Philip Krapp, Edward S. Sheldon, and Otto Jespersen.
9. G. P. Krapp, *The English Language in America* (New York: The Century Company, for the Modern Language Association of America), 1925, Vol. II, p. 7. [Reissued; Frederick Ungar Publishing Company, Inc.]
10. C. C. Fries, *The Teaching of English* (Ann Arbor: George Wahr Publishing Co., 1927), p. 7.
11. *College English*, 21 (February 1960), 275-280.
12. S. Baker, "The Art and Science of Letters: *Webster's Third New International Dictionary*," *Papers of the Michigan Academy of Science, Arts, and Letters*, 50 (1965), 532.
13. W. R. Bowden, ". . . The Way They Say It," *College English*, 22 (April 1961), 483.
14. S. Baker, *op. cit.*, pp. 528-29.
15. H. C. Wyld, *A History of Modern Colloquial English* (1920),

p. 157. O.P. [3rd ed. rev.; New York: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 1953.]
16. J. S. Kenyon, "Cultural Levels and Functional Varieties of English," *College English*, 10 (October 1948), 31-36.
17. M. Joos, *The Five Clocks* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Research Center in Anthropology, Folklore, and Linguistics, Publication 22, 1962; also New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., Harbinger Edition, 1967).
18. C. F. Hockett, *A Course in Modern Linguistics* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1953), p. 360.

Among the most helpful references in connection with this paper are the works of Gleason and Joos, cited above. In addition, the following are also pertinent:

M. A. K. Holliday, Angus McIntosh, and Peter Strevens, *The Linguistic Sciences and Language Teaching* (London, 1964; also Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1965).

R. I. McDavid, Jr. (ed.), *An Examination of the Attitudes of NCTE Toward Language*. NCTE Research Report No. 4 (Champaign, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1965).

Roger W. Shuy (ed.), *Social Dialects and Language Learning* (Champaign, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1965).

# LANGUAGE STANDARDS AND ATTITUDES: A RESPONSE

David Mackay

The world's first grammar book in English is Ælfric's, written for quite young boys, "in the hope that it may be some introduction to both Latin and English," and one that emphasises a connection between grammar and speaking correctly. In the *Colloquy* Ælfric puts his case like this:

> "We children beg thee, oh teacher, to teach us to speak because we are ignorant and speak incorrectly."
> "What do you want to say?"
> "What do we care what we say, provided it is correct speech and useful and not foolish or bad."

Some of our children today do not give this answer. They continue to speak as they were brought up. They maintain their membership in the speech fellowship to which they belong. I borrow the term "speech fellowship" from the British linguist Firth, who in a paper called "Personality and Language in Society" has this to say:

> Local dialects, regional dialects, and occupational dialects, as well as the accents of the big English schools, are speech fellowships. Within such speech fellowships a speaker is phonetically and verbally content because when he speaks to one of his fellows,

he is also speaking to himself. That can be the most deeply satisfying form of self-expression. No wonder the true proletarian despises "fancy talk" or any form of impersonation, except when it has entertainment value.

This, it is true to say, very many teachers do not understand. They are unaware of how their evaluation of speech habits devastates many of their children. They are unaware that the chief factor in their evaluation is their own social conditioning. A whole range of aesthetic and moral value judgments are made by the social group to which they belong, and they are the superior group. Therefore they are in duty bound to save their children from original linguistic sin.

And the school books are a great help. They enable the teacher to inform the child:

a) that *got* is an ugly word,
b) that *nice* is a lazy word,
c) that we do not say "we was. . .,"
d) that "I ain't got no money" means I have got *some* and that he must learn to say what he means.

The child will also learn that verbs are "doing" words, although in his simple mind he may well have thought that all words do something. He will be told "English genders are extremely simple because all inanimate things are neuter," and in the next sentence, "The moon is usually considered feminine." He will also discover that words that are not there are "understood" to be there. Later he will be fortunate enough to be informed that "The banality of a good many North American writers and speakers is in part due to their failure to understand that the genius of the English language does not lend itself to the generous use of superlative adjectives. The English prefer adverbs"; that "It is a good rule never to use a word of foreign derivation, especially Latin or Greek, when an Anglo-Saxon one will do"; and that "Latin borrowings tend to be too long and clumsy." And he will be not a little surprised to learn that "People who live rough ugly lives have rough ugly speech." He will be shown "the position of the lips for making pure sounds."

And if after all this he is "phonetically and verbally content," then he is indeed fortunate. We know, however, that this is not so, that such teaching is grievous in its effect upon children, that not only do many teachers themselves represent linguistic intolerance but they believe they have a duty to condemn the speech habits of the larger part of the community for being different. I would like to quote from Professor M. A. K. Halliday here because he puts the case for the linguist so well: "A speaker who is ashamed of his own language habits suffers a basic injury as a human being: to make anyone, especially a child, feel so ashamed is as indefensible as to make him ashamed of the colour of his skin."

A. B. Clegg in the introduction to *The Excitement of Writing* considers the same problem from a slightly different angle:

> A minority of pupils in the schools of this country are born into families whose members speak the normal language of educated society. If a child born into such a family "picks up" any phrase which does not conform to the convention, vigorous pressures are brought to bear to make him "drop it." Such a child will go to school knowing no other forms of language than those which his teachers themselves use and which his examiners demand of him.
>
> There are, however, other children, possibly a majority in the country as a whole and certainly a majority in industrial areas, who have to learn this acceptable language at school but who, in some cases, may well face discouragement, or even derision, if they venture to use it at home.
>
> For such children many social pressures inside the school and all outside it contrive to blunt the main tool of learning.[1]

In the appendix to his book, Clegg includes a statement by a boy in his first year in the sixth form of a South Yorkshire grammar school, on the effect of social pressures on speech and language:

> The problem of speech facing a sixth former in a working class area is only a relatively minor one. It is a reflection of the much greater complexities he faces in having to live two lives, but his speech may be the most prominent manifestation of his embarrassment and discomfort. He is conscious always of being different. He has received an education that does not permit him to

> accept the values and general habits of his friends and relatives. He cannot yet, however, feel part of the sort of life he is being pushed into and feels conscious of his social background when in the company of well-spoken middle-class children. Of course, again, the main cause of this discomfort is lack of communication.[2]

The selection of misconceptions and prejudices about language presented above has been taken from materials available in our schools now. And every year adds similar material to the texts available to the teacher. Who writes them? And from what source do they take their material? To find the answer one must go back to a point Professor Marckwardt has made, namely, that anyone could write a school grammar, for every native speaker of English is an expert where his language is concerned.

In our country we have had a long line of grammars for every occasion: In 1671 we have Thomas's *The Child's Delight, Together with an English Grammar;* in 1752 we have *Prittle Prattle, Or, a Familiar Discourse on the Persons I, Thou, He or She, We, Ye or You, and They,* designed for the use and benefit of the people called Quakers; in 1770, *An Easy Introduction to the English Grammar,* composed by Thomas Joel for the convenience of children under seven years of age; and about 1798 Lady Eleanor Fenn's *The Mother's Grammar, Being a Continuation of the Child's Grammar with Lessons for Parsing.*

In *Hermes or A Philosophical Inquiry Concerning Universal Grammar,* James Harris writes (Preface to the fourth edition):

> The chief end, proposed by the Author of this Treatise in making it public, has been to excite his Readers to curiosity and inquiry; not to teach them himself by prolix and formal lectures (from the efficacy of which he has little expectation) but to induce them, if possible, to become Teachers to themselves, by an impartial use of their own understandings. He thinks nothing more absurd than the common notion of instruction, as if Science were to be poured into the Mind, like water into a cistern, that passively waits to receive all that comes.[3]

Unfortunately *Hermes* had many fewer editions than Murray. And although there was wholesale canibalisation of

grammars to enable the school books to be written, and there still is, Harris appears to have been all too liberal to be attractive to the "gerund grinders." The scholars, the linguists, were ignored because they gave no support to popular prejudices about language. Presently the amateurs carry the day; and they carry it away from any linguistic objectivity to the point at which prejudice and misrepresentation are offensively displayed. They frequently concern themselves with aspects of morphology and syntax in which children have effective control; they seldom do more than mention phonetics, phonology, intonation, stress, and rhythm, and it comes as a surprise to some students to discover that spoken language has this variety of patterning.

Phonetics was an emergent science in the late nineteenth century, and its accurate and objective description of speech sounds enabled linguists to free themselves from the hold written language had on them. The amateur grammarians, however, were eating dogs born before this historical moment and were in any case constitutionally unable to deal with [illegible] to enable awareness of spoken language to be achieved.

They do not help the student to avoid ambiguities, unpremeditated tense shifts and changes of subject, nor dangling participles, nor how to extend and vary the sentence patterns he already possesses. To waste his time on what he has learned is bad enough, but to confuse and bore him and sap his confidence is worse. Such works give him no increase in power over his language and deliberately obstruct his insight.

Out of them, the amateurs, has come the belief that grammar can be equated with law and that this law-giving decides usage. In such a context mechanical correctness, the monolithic good English, good plain prose of the essay need not be defined; they are prescribed. In many of our classrooms these so-called grammars have degenerated into *do's* and *don'ts* in the way that the teaching of literature has degenerated into comprehension exercises. We find in them an inordinate concentration on linguistic table manners even

though we all spend more time eating than in learning about how to eat. There are the usual misconceptions about spoken language: that it is less grammatical than the written and less regular in its patterns. There are exercises in completing similes with no context, in looking up lists of words in a dictionary, in correcting mistakes in the use of the apostrophe. On the other hand, they ignore the nature of language. They give attention neither to varieties of dialect, which is language according to users, nor to register, which is language according to use.

It is not surprising that in some of our schools these books are not seriously considered any longer. Lower forms may have them to keep them quiet; but even the examinations offer options or near options to the teacher, so that they can do more worthwhile things than learn to confuse "It's me, It is I," "between you and me, between you and I" —the shibboleths and the negative aspects of prescriptivism. So grammar is out, for both child and teacher, and a new generation of students has grown up with grammatical concepts they have arrived at on their own. Martin Joos says somewhere that "normal fluent speech obeys about five or six grammatical rules per second: a critic can seldom detect, in a child's speech, more than one conflict with standard grammar per ten seconds on the average."

In school the teacher nags away at the problems of standards and usage, especially with the urban slum child. And the child in self-protection may refuse to acknowledge the speech habits of his teacher as superior, any more than he may accept the teacher's middle class values. It is not just the child's English which is disparaged, but also his manners, his culture, his way of living in a fellowship. And the child is in the right—his language mediates his needs and does so effectively in his environment. "There is the element of habit, custom, tradition, the element of the past, the element of innovation, of the moment, in which the future is being born. When you speak, you fuse these elements in verbal creation, the outcome of your language and your personality. What you say may be said to have style."

This is not about Charles Lamb, but about a very large number of our fellow men. Yet we know that many of the homes from which our children come equip them inadequately for what we would like to see them doing in school. Whether this is always wisely seen is another matter; and indeed one would like to see the preeminence of writing over all other language activities being examined in the light of what our children need for their lives, as children and as adults to be. We judge them according to their nonconformity to a particular language variety and, to quote Professor Halliday again, "Such attitudes may be harmful, not because they represent personal preferences but because they have the apparent objectivity of social sanction."

This is not to say that teachers should do nothing to enable children to come to terms with the standard dialect. For the middle class child whose dialect has spoken and written forms, there is no problem. This tends to hide the problem of the nonstandard speakers whose dialect has no written form. And everyone has, to some extent, to make the standard dialect his own, not only in the written medium but in the spoken medium as well, as a listener to radio and TV.

The issue is not a moral one, nor is it one of social status. As teachers we must find better reasons than these with which to motivate our children. We must be explicit and realistic about what is required, and imaginative about why it is required. Certainly the teacher must be able to look at the facts. Usage, like language, is dynamic. There is some disagreement about which are the disputed items, and they are, in any case, few enough in number not to need the expenditure of emotion at present devoted to them. But this is only part of the problem. Most of the time they are taught in a vacuum and are not seen as related to decisions about the appropriate and effective use of language in a variety of contexts and situations.

The teacher must be aware, not only of the inventory of his own available choices but also of those of his student. He must be able to identify choices in his dialect that are

different from those his student has, so that he can help the student to master the substituted items; and they must both be mindful of the situations in which these are appropriate. The teacher will do this, one hopes, in a number of ways over a considerable period of time. And both may find it worthwhile. The teacher will offer not just explanations and exhortations but example. And the learning will be achieved by using all the language skills, one's own and those of many others, to assist the process: through speaking, writing, listening, and reading, through a wide, wide range of activities associated with these.

It is not enough, as some teachers believe, to set up an exercise and think that the job is done, discover that it fails, and them blame the student for it—a carryover from the way English mistakes are dealt with. There is the story of a teacher in England who was working with his class on the substitution of *put* for *putten*. He had given them an exercise to do and was going around the class, when one boy called the teacher's attention to his neighbor by saying, "Look, Sir, he's putten *putten* and he should have putten *put*." Or there is the note left for the teacher, "I've writ *I have written* a hundred times."

The moral is perhaps that to prescribe is no answer at all when what one is finally required to do is to produce. Any activity that does not enable us to do the latter encourages misunderstanding about the nature of language, about the use we make of our native tongue, and about our appreciation of it.

**Notes**

1. A. B. Clegg (ed.), *The Excitement of Writing* (London: Chatto & Windus Ltd., 1964), p. 1.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 136.
3. James Harris, *Hermes or A Philosophical Inquiry Concerning Universal Grammar* [1751].

# LINGUISTICS AND THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH

John M. Sinclair

## Introduction

The phrase "English teacher" throughout this paper refers to someone who teaches English to young native English speakers. An English teacher may never consciously divide his functions into "lang." and "lit." work, but this must not obscure the fact that he is a language teacher just as much as is a teacher of any other language to native or foreign pupils. In recent years there has been a growing amount of discussion between language teachers and linguists about the ways in which modern theories of language, and descriptive works based on these theories, might help the task of the teacher. This paper briefly examines, first, the price the English teacher has to pay for his linguistics and what his motivation to purchase should be and, second, what criteria he should use in his choice from what is offered and likely to be offered.

SECTION I. What does the English teacher need to know about linguistics and the structure of the English language?

*Direct teaching*

It is open to the English teacher to teach courses in the structure of English, where at least part of his aim is to give his pupils an understanding of the categories and methods of modern linguistic description. It is also well inside his terms of reference to teach courses in general linguistics. This might take many forms. He might show the relationship of English to other languages, perhaps, or the relationships between speaking and other human activities, or he might tackle theory in the context of the description of the native language. An English teacher, again, might feel strongly that his pupils should be able to transcribe speech with some precision, and he would therefore prepare courses on phonetics.

Courses such as these would be in the familiar tradition of language teaching; they would involve formal displays of the results of language analysis, and the displays would be offered for their own sakes in the first instance. There are many such courses being offered today; the spread of the "new" grammar is not much slower than the recession of the "old" grammar, and the pace of the spread is accelerating.

At the present time, no resolution of the problems of the nature of formal teaching can be seen. The Dartmouth Seminar, one hopes, will make a significant advance by stating the problems clearly and separating them from each other. "Old" structural teaching seems to have failed the test of time; "new" structural teaching offers only potential and faces a hail of criticism and gloomy prognostication. The last ten years have seen great changes in linguistic theory, but the textbooks and the background books are just beginning to record and analyse and interpret these advances; their possible and actual effect on the classroom cannot be assessed for several years. One certain feature of the professional scene in the coming years will be controversy over the role of direct linguistics teaching from the cradle onwards.

What does the teacher need to know? Clearly we cannot

specify anything as a necessity in advance of an evaluation of the results of experiment. But the existence of the controversy makes it essential that an English teacher know enough about linguistics to make up his own mind. The last two years have seen the start of the supply of information and opinion directly to teachers in the form of books written specially for them, some of them too recent to be taken into account in this paper. Presumably an English teacher in training at present will study these books in detail.

We can go no farther than that. A closer look at the content of linguistics courses, or a survey of specific arguments on their educational basis, would lie outside the title of this paper. They would rather be answers to the question "What does the pupil need to know?" with an inference that the teacher would have to know too. All we must prescribe for the English teacher as regards teaching of linguistics (including formal structural teaching) is enough knowledge to evaluate the changing scene, to experiment with new approaches, and to calculate the effect of the advances on his teaching as a whole. No less is expected of a teacher in any other subject.

*The teacher as a linguist*

We now leave aside the question of what is taught explicitly in the classroom and turn to what may not be so obviously taught. Linguistics is often offered as a suggestion to language teachers, as if it were something they could reject. This is implied, for example, in my title. Now of course it is open to a teacher to reject any particular brand of linguistics or to regard it as of limited or of general use in his execution of his duties, but he cannot teach English without *some* linguistics. He may conceal it from his pupils and even largely from himself; he may play down the language side as much as possible. But the teaching of a language inevitably implies the analysis of it. Syllabuses must be prepared, and lessons within syllabuses. Standards must be defined. The pupils must be assessed. No pupil could

survive such an exposure to language analysis without acquiring from his teacher (a) a general attitude to language and (b) a very large number of observations about the structure of the language.

We need look no farther than learning to read and write to see the truth of this statement. The pupil must examine his sound system and imbibe a writing system from scratch. He must understand what a transcription is. Some explanation must be offered him for the existence of ambiguities in his speech and his writing, explanation also for the much vaunted oddities thrown up by a lack of corrrelation between the two systems. He must be given reasons why he must learn to read and write, and so he will also learn something of the social role of linguistic communication.

The linguistic sciences attempt to answer the question "What is the nature of those parts of our physical, mental, and social organisation which enable us to attach an arbitrary significance to utterances?" The native language teacher is the first person a child meets who is professionally [illegible] whether he means to or not.

The duty of the teacher is quite clear. If his views on the nature of language are going to rub off anyway, it is up to him to examine them most critically in the light of what full-time linguists have to say. If his detailed knowledge of the structure of his native language is going to pervade a great deal of his teaching, he should feel secure that it is the best available. This argues a heavy commitment to linguistics, since it demands not only intellectual understanding of the subject but daily practical use of it. In turn, linguistic theory and descriptions will have to meet conditions like those to be set out in Section II.

*Traditional grammar*

It is too early yet to say that we have got rid of traditional grammar and oversimplified standards in favour of either superior analytical systems or another sort of approach al-

together. We are apt to forget that we still have the inheritance of what we learned ourselves. We have, for example, a rich and flexible international terminology for language analysis, so valuable that modern linguistics is adapting it rather than replacing it. We have the sociolinguistic status quo in the received standards of correctness, attitudes to dialects, and jargons and linguistic change. We have our own conditioned responses (e.g., to bad spelling) which may still surprise us. It is difficult for the established present-day English teacher to imagine what it is like *not* to know a system of analysing the language, nor to have hairspring sensitivity to the indexical features of language. We can reject tradgram from our syllabuses but not from our own thoughts and attitudes.

Two points emerge from the preceding. One, outside the terms of this paper, would be a discussion of what it is like to be ignorant of the analysis of one's native language. The other is that a teacher needs training in how to be objective about his own linguistic behaviour, prejudices, and automatic reactions.

*The native speaker as learner*

Someone who teaches English to foreign pupils in their own country is often the only model that the pupils have. Someone teaching English to foreign students in the United Kingdom or the United States has to take into account the other models to which his students will be exposed. Someone teaching English to native speakers faces the problem that his pupils are already expert at some important aspects of English and that they therefore set different standards of explanation. An explanation of, say, a grammatical point, which a pupil can compare with his knowledge and experience of English, and which survives the comparison, is useful; one which is inaccurate is at best useless and at worst confusing. It is unwise to take liberties with native speakers or to underestimate their powers of detecting inconsistencies in linguistic argument. They may not be explicit about

inaccuracies, but they will recognise them just the same. The utility value of what they learn about their language will depend largely on how far they can perceive it correlating with their internalised competence.

A great deal more research is needed on the relationship between what the native speaker is taught about his language and what he already knows. In the meantime we should play safe and adopt aims like

a) precision of statement, no matter how elementary or how disguised,
b) coherence of statements with regard to each other so that a consistent picture is built up by the pupil,
c) full explanations for all attempts to alter a pupil's linguistic habits.

To carry out these aims, a teacher would require considerable linguistic expertise.

*Section I Summary*

It appears from the foregoing that the minimum linguistic competence required of an English teacher must be sufficient knowledge

a) to assess continuously the role of direct teaching of linguistics in the classroom,
b) to express, directly or not, views about the nature of language and the structure of English which accord with the best scholarship available,
c) to counterbalance the effects of his own learning of English,
d) to guarantee the native speaker that the linguistic apparatus which will be used on or near him will be as self-consistent and comprehensive as possible.

Nothing short of a proper professional training in linguistics will suffice. No case has been made here for specialised English language teachers. Every English teacher needs to learn about the present state of linguistics. Every teacher needs to be able to follow developments in theory and description throughout his teaching career.

## SECTION II. What are the properties of a linguistic theory such that the description of English will be the most valuable to teachers of English?

### *Linguistic theories*

A linguistic theory provides categories with which languages can be described. It must have enough categories of the right type, and no more. It cannot be modified if by chance it does not suit a language teacher. In the next few paragraphs the language teacher's preferences will be mentioned. Any of them could be the deciding factor in choosing between two linguistic theories which were otherwise equivalent, but the equivalence of the theories would have to be established in advance. For example, a teacher who proposes to use linguistic description overtly in class will be on the lookout for a theory with a simple and restricted terminology and a grammar which is based on obvious units such as *word* and *sentence*. A linguist offering a theory which created a huge terminology and worked with units which could scarcely be related to words and sentences might have to retort that no theory could otherwise account for the nature of language. A linguist talking to English teachers often feels he should apologise, as it were, for the nature of language.

### *Language development*

No one knows exactly how a human being stores and uses his linguistic knowledge, but everyone speculates. A description of a language which precisely modelled the behaviour of native speakers would be a start, but it still could be organised according to entirely different principles. At present one assesses the "naturalness" of a linguistic theory by mainly subjective reaction; as knowledge of mental processes grows, the choice may rest on sounder criteria. Until then, the English teacher should rely solely on his intuitions about the nature of language.

A native learner of English has an important developmental aspect to his linguistic behaviour. This is obvious in his early years, but once he has mastered the common phonological and syntactic patterns of English we tend to think that from a developmental point of view he does little more than to add a few frills. As yet we are fairly ignorant of the later stages of development, while the learner is at school and beyond. Descriptive linguists find it convenient to suppose for the purposes of analysis that the language is stable in time and that informants do not differ on a developmental axis. In emphasising the contrast between synchronic and diachronic linguistics they have tended to equip themselves for description along a single dimension only. The English teacher is not directly concerned with the language behaviour of mature adults. He may select some of it as his teaching model, that is all. But he does need to understand the difficulties his pupils face and their typical patterns of development so that he can organise his material economically and effectively.

*Comprehensiveness*

With each linguistic description we can associate a corpus of utterances, namely those which are satisfactorily described. It is unlikely that two differently organised descriptions will relate to exactly the same corpus, even though there will be a great deal of overlap. Again, a description will reveal normally that it is designed to cope with certain utterances in an elegant manner but drags in the rest solely in order to be comprehensive. All descriptions of English will be satisfactory, no doubt, with a sentence like *the cat sat on the mat,* but some may not be illuminating about *no smoking.*

Each English teacher has a good idea of the corpus of utterances with which he is concerned. He would do well to be as explicit as possible about his corpus and then to examine the market to see if his interests can be met. The teacher may also want to insist on certain features of the

description of the utterances; he may, for example, be prepared to back a phonetics theory only if it can help him to describe what we call "tone of voice."

In its early years the linguistic discussion of literary texts lost impact because of its suggestions that great writers used deviant grammar and linguistic trickery. Current popular theories had no provision for distinguishing between different types of deviation from everyday usage. Since literary texts figure largely in the normal English curriculum, this lack had the effect of tying one of the teacher's hands behind his back.

The English teacher, then, must decide what corpus he is interested in and what particular features of the corpus are likely to be important, and then he must study the market to see if his demands can be met, watching out for "ragbag" descriptions where a spurious comprehensiveness is gained by simple listing or little more than that.

A typical example of the focussing interests of teachers is the attention being paid at present to the study of specialised varieties of English. The linguistic theories have not yet caught up with the needs of teachers because of the present speed of change. In the traditional teaching pattern in the United Kingdom there was hardly any attention paid to this aspect of language patterning, and some of the teaching was willingly delegated to specialist teachers of other subjects. Now we are at a growth point, and a linguistic theory which incorporates high-level statements about language varieties will be preferred to one which includes variety differentials as little more than a mopping-up operation in description.

### *Internal relations*

Each and every feature of a linguistic theory could be assessed for its value in language teaching, however unrealistic the assessment might be. There seem to be two general features which are worth separate assessment: the internal *divisions* of the theory and resultant descrip-

tions, and the *contact* with physically-occurring language.

With reference to the network of related categories which constitutes a linguistic theory, we can ask the question "How isolated is each component from all the others?" or "How simple is the input to each component?" The process of teaching language systematically or explaining particular features is aided by the presentation of material in small, relatively isolated portions, and a theory should be examined with this point in mind. There is a good supporting reason at the present time, when all branches of linguistics are feverishly active. Minor improvements to descriptions are suggested day by day but can be incorporated only if their disturbance to the rest of the description is purely local. Because English teachers are not yet acclimatised to grammars which change more rapidly than the language they describe, careful consideration should be given to this practical point.

Language which actually occurs is the main evidence on which descriptions are based and from which theories evolve. Theories are abstract, but their provisions for contact between description and text may differ in directness.

The language teacher has to handle actual language, find examples, correct, and advise. If a description is to be useful to him, it will be one which maintains close contact with the textual phenomena. A criterion such as this is dangerous in practice, since it might lead to preference being given to a description that boasted a spurious simplicity. But it is a substantial criterion nevertheless. It seems almost certain that the teacher will have to avoid reference to difficult linguistic abstractions in most of his teaching. He is therefore reliant on some kind of inductive process being established (or tapped).

### *Language skills*

An English teacher has as a major concern the development of language skills in his pupils. He has to teach people how to do things with their language. Therefore he is look-

ing for a theory which stresses the *pragmatic* side of linguistic description. On this depend so many things. His theory must contain evaluative criteria. It must enable him to move towards assessing the success of an utterance on a particular occasion. It must include (as we have seen) an elaborate treatment of the nature of specialised varieties of a language. It must come to grips with the central concepts of *style, correctness,* and *acceptability.* For some time now linguists have tended to take a far too narrow view of their subject matter. Description, not prescription, was the motto; the accent was on structural patterning, and the actual pragmatic value of an utterance in a discourse was never discussed. At the present time, "correct English" and "good style" are terms from different, if not incompatible, areas of the subject; from a pragmatic point of view they are different stages of the same process, that of creating effective utterances.

*Section II Summary*

The linguistic theory which suits the English teacher best is one which

a) fits our intuitions and knowledge of the internalised theory of native speakers,
b) has a strong developmental aspect,
c) is truly comprehensive in the corpus it can describe and in the distinctions it can make during description,
d) makes possible descriptions which are internally divided and isolating and in which close contact is always maintained between abstract categories and texts,
e) contains a pragmatic component which allows useful discussion of style, correctness, and acceptability.

# THE BREADTH AND DEPTH OF ENGLISH IN THE UNITED STATES

Joshua Fishman

Never before having addressed an audience of Englishmen—not even English men from the United States—I would like nothing better at this time than to be able to present to you an integrative revelation that is both exquisitely correct and breathtakingly beautiful and that will strike each of you as crucial for the very purposes that have brought us all here. Unfortunately, nothing that I have learned during my seven days amongst you makes me the least bit confident that I can come anywhere near that happy state of affairs, nor, indeed, that a human being with that capacity exists. I have noted several of your terms, your concerns, your certainties, and your queries, and I have compared them with my own. While I note some correspondence between these two sets of filters, I do wish that it were much more substantial so that you could now encounter as much gratification in finding something of value in my realm of interest as I have, these seven days, in yours.

When I was engaged in the "Survey of Non-English Language Resources of the United States," I was primarily

concerned with what *had* been done, what was *being* done, and with what more *could* be done to strengthen the many languages brought to this country during three centuries of immigration. Thus, my volume on *Language Loyalty in the United States* deals not with English *per se*, but, rather with Anglification—slow or rapid, forced, unforced, or desired—that is, with the various social, economic, cultural, and political forces that have influenced language maintenance and language shift throughout American history and for most of its major subpopulations.[1] Since much of English teaching in the United States, in England, and elsewhere as well may be viewed as "planned language shift," the total American experience with respect to Anglification (perhaps the most *rapid* and most *massive* example of language shift in *world* history) may well be of interest to English teachers.

However, rather than review or repeat that which I have already done, I would like to offer you some reflections not on Anglification *per se*, but on some substratum sociolinguistic phenomena of an attitudinal and of an overt nature that may remain even after as widespread and as rapid Anglification as the United States has experienced. (While I have some impressions and convictions concerning how long these substratum forces continued to influence behavior, I would welcome your comments in this connection, for they may be based on more sensitive observation than my own, and, even more, in connection with two resultant questions: [1] Should the English curriculum capitalize upon these substratum forces, or should it ignore or even counteract them? and [2] How should it proceed in attempting to do either or, more selectively, both?)

It is common to expect that the major social institutions lending strength and depth to native language mastery are the family, the school, and the church. However, in the United States each of these institutions entails certain limitations vis-à-vis English that have not yet been fully recognized at this Seminar nor, as far as I know, among English specialists more widely.

While the majority of American families are English-speaking social units, the proportion of families that are not is many times greater than is commonly supposed. Conservative estimates derived from the mother-tongue data reported by the 1960 census indicate that nineteen million white Americans have a mother tongue other than English. Roughly half of these individuals are American-born (indeed, approximately a quarter are children of parents who are themselves American-born) and, therefore, constitute a population segment still in school, still young, still destined to be part of America for many many decades. By way of example, let me read from a news item that appeared in last Monday's *New York Times,* just a few days after your arrival here in Hanover:

> The "most acute educational problem" in the Southwest is the inadequate schooling for 1.75 million Mexican-American children, according to a 40-page report issued last week by the National Education Association.
>
> The report, prepared after a year's study of the Spanish-speaking children in Arizona, California, Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas, discloses a grim prevalence of low grades, high dropout rates and difficulties stemming from schools' insistence on the use of English as the classroom language.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> . . . the N.E.A. report says that Mexican-American children "start school with a decided handicap, fall behind their classmates in the first grade, and each passing year finds them farther behind."
>
> . . . . . .
>
> The "decided handicap" at the start of the Mexican-American's education is his almost exclusive use of Spanish.
>
> "He knows some English but has used it infrequently," the report observes. "The language of his home, his childhood, his first years, is Spanish. His environment, his experiences, his very personality have been shaped by it."
>
> But the student with this background often discovers that English is the only language acceptable in school, the report notes.
>
> "In some schools the speaking of Spanish is forbidden both in the classrooms and on the playground" and "not infrequently students have been punished for lapsing into Spanish. This has even extended to corporal punishment," the report asserts.

> In addition to the language barrier, the education association goes on, the Mexican-American student in the beginning "encounters a strange and different set of culture patterns, an accelerated tempo of living and, more often than not, teachers who, though sympathetic and sincere, have little understanding of the Spanish-speaking people, their customs, beliefs and sensitivities."
>
> The association recommends the following remedies for the problem in the Southwest:
>
> Bilingual instruction in preschool programs and early grades.
>
> The teaching of English as a second language.
>
> Emphasis on the reading, writing and speaking of good Spanish, since Mexican-American children are so often illiterate in it.
>
> Other proposals include the employment of Spanish-speaking teachers and teachers' helpers, improved collegiate training for teachers in bilingual situations and the repeal of state laws that specify English as the language of instruction.[2]

My general point here is *not* that most of these nineteen million Americans do not as a rule know (speak, read, write) English—for unlike the Mexican-Americans, most of them do—but, rather, that their relationship to English in general, to standard literary English more particularly, and to sensitivity, to expressive, effective, subjective English most particularly, must be carefully examined.

Passing beyond these first nineteen million whose mother tongue is other than English, let us now consider an additional fifty to sixty million white Americans who are the first generation of individuals with English as their mother tongue in their families. These individuals—constituting as much as a third of our total population, an even larger proportion of our white population, and, in many regions of our country, half to three quarters of that population—grew up in homes and in neighborhoods in which another language was frequently heard in the stores, in the parks, in the churches, on the radio, at large and small family celebrations, and at organizational functions or "events."

If we now add to this group and to the preceding one another which includes those who are only the second generation with English as their mother tongue, i.e., individuals

whose grandparents provided a context of functional validity and intimacy for a language other than English, we will have accounted for close to two thirds of the white population of the United States. You do not have to scratch most white Americans very hard to elicit other than English sounds, other stress patterns, other rhythms, other verbal imagery and intonation—all with emotional connotations, complexly and simultaneously positive, negative, and ambivalent.

The largest and the most concentrated segments of the American population whose roots in English are as much as three generations deep are either the recently urbanized and severely dislocated Negroes, on the one hand, or the rural and small-town southern whites, on the other. Each of these two subpopulations presents distinct problems to the teacher of English, among them indifferent control of school English, distance from any literate heritage, and —in many cases—alienation from schooling or from the broader society more generally.

Formal schooling and formal churching (if I may coin such a term) in the United States are also far from implying a deepening of personal ties with the English language or even certain exposure to that which is richest, most moving, most revealing, most subtle in that language. It is not so long since state superintendents (or commissioners) of public instruction (or of education, these two terms being used interchangeably for some reason) complained bitterly in their annual reports that not a word of English was to be heard in a wide segment of the public schools under their jurisdiction.

Missouri's Superintendent of Public Instruction complained in his report for 1887-1888 as follows:

> In a large number of the districts of the State, the German element of the population greatly preponderates and, as a consequence, the schools are mainly taught in the German language and sometimes entirely so. Hence, if an American family lives in such a district, the children must either be deprived of school privileges or else be taught in the German language. (pp. 67-68)

and in 1889:

> The law should specify definitely in what language the instruction of our public schools is to be given. It is a shame and a disgrace to have the English language ruled out of our public schools and German substituted, as is done wholly or in part in many districts in this State. (p. 68)

The Dakota Territorial Board of Education, in its report for 1886-1888, stated:

> Some instances came to the attention of the Board where the teacher was not even able to speak the English language and nothing could be done about it, as the foreign element was so strong that they not only controlled the schools, but the election of the county superintendent also. (p. 68)[3]

When this state of affairs (i.e., the existence of non-English public schools) was left behind, it was accomplished in a slow and transitional rather than in an absolute manner. Many in this room are young enough (or is it old enough?) to have attended the bilingual public schools of Baltimore, Cincinnati, St. Louis, Minneapolis, and other large cities—not to mention those in a veritable host of smaller towns. Today, such public schools, though few in number, are again on the increase—and the demand for them, as indicated by the *New York Times* news item that I read earlier, is much greater than at *any* time during the past fifty years.

Finally, in a further transitional stage, it must be pointed out that the portion of American children now attending either supplementary or parochial schools offering instruction via (or of) a language which is the "ethnic mother tongue" of these pupils or the language of a great secular or religious tradition to which they and their parents are attached is really quite large (reaching approximately 25 percent of the white elementary school-age population). Thus, much formal education in America has had (and has now) other languages to think of and other language sensitivities to cultivate than those that pertain to English—although one would never discover this truth from reading any of the usual histories of American education.

Since our Seminar is convened in this lovely New England setting, it may be doubly instructive to mention that half of the famous "Sentinelliste affair" of barely fifty years ago transpired within a two hundred mile radius of Hanover. The other half transpired in Rome where ecclesiastic authorities finally threatened millions of former French-Canadians living in Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island with excommunication if they persisted in their demand for French-speaking parishes, French-speaking priests, and French-teaching schools. The Franco-Americans finally submitted to Church authorities, particularly since overly rapid "Americanism" too was then declared a heresy, taking other steps to make sure that French remains very much alive in New England as it does to this very day. However, millions of Polish-Americans left the Catholic Church and established here a religious body that had never existed in Poland, the Polish National Catholic Church, in order to be able to conduct services and all parish affairs in Polish. Millions more, and not only Poles, but Slovaks, Ukrainians, Croatians, and others transferred from Roman Catholicism to Greek Orthodoxy where sermons and parish activities (including education of the young) were (and are to this very day) more frequently conducted in their traditional languages, in a hallowed language more similar to them.

Similarly, Lutherans, Baptists, Calvinists, and other "national" Protestant churches long continued (or some do even now) to stress services, ceremonies, and sermons in languages other than English, such as German, Norwegian, and Dutch. (Certainly this has been true of Jewish religious bodies as well, and seems to be becoming more so, as the uncertainties and conflicts of immigrant status and superpatriotism recede.)

Let me stress, once again, the primary reason why I bring all of these considerations before this group—since I, for one, do not bemoan or regret most of the circumstances that I have mentioned. English has consistently occupied an official position in American life (although even here it

has not been, and it is not today, the *only* language to be recognized for official purposes of government or citizenship within the country), but English has not *long* been the traditional, habitual, customary language for *all* expressions of personal and social genius for any but a *small* body of America's citizenry. Those who have had a relatively effortless and effectively accurate control of a repertoire of English registers—one for the intimacy of family and friends, one for the impersonal casualness of business and other daily routines, one for the technical intricacies of the work sphere, one for High Culture and Great Literary Tradition, and one for the chapter and verse of laws and ordinances—these have not only been few and far between (for they may have been and still be that in England as well), but they have not been fully accepted as models or as arbiters by many more.

*In addition* to our toleration for regional and social variation even in the domains of the school, the church, and the media (which seriously limits consensus-producing or -enforcing machinery in the language area), *in addition* to the self-scale and social segmentation that we have so long ignored that many teachers and parents simply cannot understand "where all those Negroes came from all of a sudden" and "why can't they talk American like the rest of us," *in addition* to deep-seated, popular low-browism, *particularly* in the humanities area (such that virtuosity in English is still viewed as a form of effeminacy and is, therefore, kept well disguised)—*in addition to all of the foregoing,* there is another substratum factor that may be even more taboo, more upsetting, more fervently denied, and therefore more difficult to face or "correct" (and we here hold a horrible hatred for the things we cannot fix or change), and that is the fact that very few of us love English or cherish it from the very center of our being (as Frenchmen do French, as Israelis do Hebrew, as Arabs do Koranic Arabic—whether or not they are themselves privileged to control it). Very few Americans aspire to (let alone are able to) react to English with the confidence and

the tenderness that come from long and comfortable association with national mythological symbols and values that are held through thick and thin, in sickness and in health, 'til death do us part. I must add that very few of the Americans in this room today are either drawn from or in touch with that reservoir from which two thirds of the white American population *is* drawn and for whom ethnic, non-English associations are part of the real things and real situations that language is about, and to which real literature and great traditions and linguistic insight must also somehow be related.

The components of culture and their expression in social behavior are not all of the same cloth. The externals of dress, recreation, diet, housing, transportation, and even those of loyalty and informality, change and regroup more rapidly than do concepts of beauty, directions in life, customs of marriage, expressions of piety, and implementation of group sentiments. Many Americans have overtly moved away most rapidly from the primordial sentiments toward kith and kin, toward birthplace, and toward custom. Nevertheless, I am trying to argue for greater sensitivity to two possibilities: first of all, that these primordial sentiments are often still there, well hidden though they may be from the eyes of the English teacher, and expressed or sublimated via ditties and at parties, through ethnic humor, ethnic voting, and ethnic restauranting, through "curious" electives in college and summer camping, via the menus of church suppers and the odds and ends of home furnishing, through *over*-rejection of "old country" ways and their surprising *preservation* in the bosom of the mind; secondly, our American modernity and affluence, this "greater freedom" if you like, has left many of our adults and children alike with rather less *sprachgefuhl* than might be expected of other native speakers of English, with similar income, education, and formal cultural exposure.

If this broad picture that I have sketched is valid—at least in part—should it somehow influence the conceptual and functional ingredients of the English curriculum with

which *you* are concerned? Does it not influence some important corners of the ethnography of our personal and of our national English-speaking life—not the life of this or that writer who becomes great, not only despite his unusual language background but, in part, because of it—but the *life of English* as a deep component of American experience and of American national awareness? Does the kind of language disadvantage that I have sketched not influence our individual dreams and sensitivity to self—as well as our public utterances—in view of the fact that these are all so frequently refracted through such a thin brittle layer of English, which is often itself superimposed over layers of guilt due to the rejection of other tongues, mother tongues, and grandmother tongues? Does the fact that the English language in the United States is, like the Mississippi River, a mile wide but frequently only an inch deep—with other, perhaps deeper, rivers flowing far below it—not result in a peculiarly *American* feeling of uneasiness about correctness or propriety of usage (among parents and teachers alike) rather than a concern for authentic revelations to oneself and to others?

Whatever your answers to these questions may be—and they may vary from "let sleeping dogs lie" to "unchain the hidden forces"—it may merit consideration that English in America is still a far more fragile and unfamiliar flower, and for other or additional reasons than the ones that most of those who teach it and love it are likely to admit. Part of the *American* experience with English has been to encourage, to help, to nudge, and to force millions to seemingly forget and deny parts of themselves. It is, therefore, a particularly *American* dilemma to have to use this same means, English, to also help these very same millions to recognize, sensitize, clarify, and intensify themselves.

**Notes**

1. Joshua A. Fishman *et al.*, *Language Loyalty in the United States* (New York: Humanities Press, Inc., 1967).
2. *New York Times*, August 22, 1966. © 1966 by The New York

Times Company. Reprinted by permission. The report cited in the news story is Maria Urquides (chm.), *The Invisible Minority.* Report of the NEA-Tucson Survey on the Teaching of Spanish to the Spanish-Speaking (Washington, D. C.: Department of Rural Edution, National Education Association, 1966). Excerpts are used by permission of the Department.

3. Quotations from Missouri and Dakota Territory are from C. H. Handschin, *The Teaching of Modern Language in the United States* (Washington, D. C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1913).

# WORKING PARTY 5 AND STUDY GROUP 8: FINAL REPORT

## I. OPENING STATEMENT

Working Party 5 and Study Group 8, which joined forces a week or more ago, have requested the present meeting because we were asked by a number of you to say something about the contribution the linguist has to make to the teaching of English. We are glad of the opportunity to submit a series of seven papers with a covering list of what seem to us the main issues deserving discussion. Our intention is only to furnish focus and not at all to put out of consideration any germane question.

In preparing these statements we have been struck over and over again by the impossibility of separating the language part from the rest of the English program. Language pervades all the English teacher's concerns—the child's self-expression, communication between the child and his schoolmates, as well as with his teacher, most of the skills the child learns, all the other arts, examinations—everything. In the other working parties and study groups too, questions of language have repeatedly forced themselves to the center of discussion. It is no exaggeration to say that language is the single unifying element in all education. Once this is recognized, it follows that to get the

truth about language, as nearly as possible, is of crucial importance. Insofar as language is misunderstood or falsely taught, or is used to the psychic, social, or intellectual detriment of the child, the English teacher is not doing his job, and everybody is the poorer.

As further preface to discussion we may do well to notice in Section II the last definition of a native speaker. This important individual, the token of everyone on earth who speaks, is there described as someone "who is by nature curious" about his language. This is an important truth: man is a speaking animal; he enjoys the instrument of speech and is intrigued with it. Herein lies the initial opportunity of the teacher. The child's natural interest has only to be wisely used to bring his waking imagination and intelligence into play. Much bad teaching of the past, and unfortunately of the present, is due to failure here; instead of liberating the child as native speaker and writer of his own language, the schools have attempted to make him over according to some stultifying concept of "correctness." Section IV, "Standards and Attitudes," especially shows the result of this misteaching. The ultimate effects have been sketched eloquently, and perhaps frighteningly, by Professor Barbara Strang in a note written for one of the other study groups. A kind of self-spreading infection becomes current among the public, who do not even know that they are ill. Too many English teachers are indistinguishable from this public.

The teacher who has no training in English linguistics is almost certain to be carrying around *and relaying* old-fashioned and discredited notions, derived in bits and pieces, held uncritically and unsystematically, but often expressed without doubt or hesitation. People who know nothing about chemistry or hermeneutics may be willing to admit their ignorance. Not so when it comes to language. There is no field in which people generalize with more confidence on less evidence than in this. It is abundantly clear that English teachers need retraining, especially in regard to language. The "minimum essentials" that might be required of one

properly retrained are set out in Section VII, "Linguistics for the English Teacher." We emphasize too that what needs to be corrected is no mere matter of facts or information. Even more it is the *attitudes* of teachers that need to be reformed; Sections III and IV especially touch on this.

The question on which our group finds least agreement—in fact, a sharp difference of opinion—is whether or not, in teaching children the so-called "productive" skills of reading and writing, it is necessary to teach language structure *explicitly*. On one side it is held that explicit teaching is unnecessary or even harmful; on the other, that without explicit teaching the child will not learn structure at all. Parts of both Section V and Section VI are relevant here. This is certainly one area in which experimental evidence is needed. Another is the extent to which abstract knowledge is transferable to concrete problems in the use of English.

In Section VI examples are offered of methods now used in some schools in the United States to arrive *inductively* at the child's internal knowledge of language structure. There the aims of a curriculum set out in explicit terms are for the teachers, not the students. The teacher's knowledge about the language should be systematic; getting the same knowledge to a student may require a very different approach.

Probably the last thing we want to mention at this point is our very insistent feeling that no education can be adequate in which knowledge of our native language, knowledge of the mother tongue, is false or shallow or trivial. Language is too important to every individual, and to our civilization, for the teacher of English to betray it.

## II. NATIVE SPEAKERS

The native speaker of English is an important person in our considerations. We are looking inside him and outside him, and a major purpose of our discussions here is to give thought to how he is to be nurtured in his language until he is an adult.

Who is he? There are many confusions, some of which are sketched out below. We submit that until we clarify the *nativeness* of young native speakers, curriculum decisions will continue to rest on unexamined assumptions.

Statement No. 1 is an everyday operational definition; No. 2 is a sort of dictionary one; No. 3 is important in any study of standards; No. 4 expresses wonder at the robustness of native speakers; No. 5 is the only stupid statement; No. 6 explores the notion "knowledge of the language." No. 7 is so obvious that it is offered without further comment; the breadth of its implications is hinted at in other working papers.

WHO IS A NATIVE SPEAKER OF L? (L is any common or garden language.)

1. A native speaker of L is someone whose utterances are samples of L. This definition is cast in terms of typicality. In a sense it is circular and not especially helpful to educators.

2. A native speaker of L is someone who has no language acquired prior to L. Here nativeness is explained in terms of priority in the learning process, but the definition is less explicit than No. 6.

3. A native speaker of L is someone who can understand all varieties of L. The limits and extent of his comprehensibility define L (allowing leeway for acclimatization).

Do the limits vary with age? If so, how? Does acclimatization improve with practice? Research is needed before any idea of a *receptive* standard can be considered relevant.

4. A native speaker of L is someone who will accept uncritically any half-baked statement about L, perform any ill-conceived exercise in L, think any random thought about L, without actually destroying his ability to communicate in L. He is insulated from his teachers.

What happens if he gets better statements and exercises and has his thoughts discussed? What happens if he develops critical powers over L? We might give it a try.

5. A native speaker of L is someone in whom L is enshrined. There is no such person, although many suffer custodian-delusion because of an inaccurate perception of linguistic change. Sententious statements like this and many other wrong-headed notions cause an embarrassing consumer pressure that the teacher of L (after treatment) can resist and perhaps replace.

6. A native speaker of Lx is someone who learns Lx as his first language in an unselfconscious L-speaking environment. Lx is thus preschool language, which is not the same as L. During schooling Lx becomes L, and thus the situation is no different from teaching a foreign language L2.

Is this true? Are there any differences beyond age, attainment level, diet, etc.? Does the same teaching to speakers of Lx and speakers of (L2 + Lx) produce a different effect? Who are native writers of L?

7. A native speaker of L is someone who is by nature curious about L.

## III. STANDARD ENGLISH AND THE SCHOOLS

Standard English, like any form of living language, is not a fixed but a changing thing; hence it cannot be defined in any sharply limited or narrow way. Yet this does not mean that it is nebulous or indescribable; it differs quite specifically from other types of English and has positive characteristics of its own.

Probably the foremost of these is the sphere of its use. Though it began fully five centuries ago in a limited geographic area and has since spread to every corner of the world, though its pronunciation was originally that of the same small area but now includes many local, regional, and national variants, also variants in vocabulary and even syntax, it has always been that type of English used by educated people when carrying on their affairs publicly, in writing and in speech. It is therefore the language of law, learning, literature, government, religion, and the schools, but with at least two distinct registers, the formal and the informal,

in which it varies according to time, place, purpose, and other circumstances.

It is essential for the teacher of English at any and every level to recognize several facts about Standard English. First, it is not monolithic: there is no single or only right variety; as an over-dialect it subsumes many types. Second, it never has been, is not, and cannot be fixed so long as it is alive; any skillful user has the right to avail himself creatively of its capacity to grow. Third, though, owing to the sphere of its use, it necessarily has prestige; this fact does not render false or valueless all other dialects or varieties of English; these have their right to exist and are frequently a means of revitalizing the Standard form.

A true understanding of the nature of Standard English should entail for the teacher certain attitudes toward the language. He should realize that, if the child brings a nonstandard speech from home and community, this is not to be rejected in favor of Standard. Rather, Standard should be aimed at as something to be added, so that ultimately, if the occasion arises for communication in a wider context, the child will be able to switch to Standard to suit that occasion.

The teacher should recognize that the highest goal in speaking or writing language of whatever kind is not some sort of "correctness" but, rather, effectiveness—effectiveness in getting the message in the most appropriate way to the intended audience. It is possible to speak and write badly, that is ineffectively, in any idiom; merely to use the Standard dialect is not enough to produce good speaking and writing. The emphasis thus should go always on effective communication. The common emphasis today on superficial "correctness," both inside and outside the schools, is utterly misplaced; it is probably the root of our deep dissatisfactions with the teaching of English.

To cure this unsatisfactory situation, the teacher must be retrained; present methods of training must themselves be revised; and one essential which we must insist on is a sound knowledge of the mother tongue, its nature both

past and present, and the role it plays in verbal communication of every sort, both practical and artistic. To give the teacher of English, at any level, less than this retraining will be to compound our past mistakes with present stupidity to the further impoverishment of the future.

## IV. STANDARDS AND ATTITUDES

The case for allowing children to speak and write fluently and spontaneously is accepted by many teachers, and today many young children are encouraged to express and communicate their individual interests. At the same time they are often engaged in the reading of materials that are covertly prescriptive, banal, and unrelated to life and language. There is a clash of interest here that some children do not survive; but even when this is not so, there is evidence that teachers have too little awareness of *all* the child's needs.

Children collect, categorize, and systematize the mass of facts, feelings, and observations in their daily lives, and they make a great variety of utterances which absorb the results of these processes. Of all this effort some is used in their writing, much more in their speaking and thinking. Children are using language to mediate needs, and language events are the most significant in their lives. Not only do they use language creatively in all their living, but they work out a means of thinking about what they are doing, of communicating with themselves.

Here, as we have seen, teachers are less than helpful. The facts they present run counter to the observations children have made; and when teachers do not know the facts, students are alone with the problem. A successful solution depends on the effectiveness of the strategies that the student has at his disposal. Thus we see the twelve-year-old backward reader writing the word "hedgehog" with a set of orthographic rules he misunderstood when he was five: in *his* writing system it becomes "egog." What his teachers have told him over a period of years has made no difference to the effectiveness of his strategies. No con-

nection has been established between what he understands and what he is told to understand. His teachers see their task as telling him something and then asking questions or setting problems to elicit the answers they gave in the first place, not that of discovering what it is the child thinks, nor how he is able to modify his thinking during the learning process, nor whether he can think at all about the learning process.

Here are a few examples of five-year-old children demonstrating this in interviews conducted by a psychologist:

**Q:** What are letters for?
**A:** You have to know them.
**Q:** What will you do with them?
**A:** Put them away—maybe keep them out all the time, maybe put them away.
**Q:** What is hard about your reading a book?
**$A_1$:** The bits you forget.
**$A_2$:** "Milk."
**Q:** Why?
**A:** Because it's "milk."
**Q:** Why is it hard?
**A:** Because it's "M." We've not had it before.
**Q:** Is there anything funny about "have"?
**A:** It's got an "e" on the end. It should only have three letters instead of four letters being there. You go to sound it, and you hardly know what to say. It's like a different word.
**Q:** What do you do when you see a word that you don't know?
**$A_1$:** You say one letter and then the next.
**Q:** [pointing to "and"] What is that word?
**A:** G-N-B. . . .
**Q:** How do you learn new words?
**$A_1$:** You say M-A-T. Some people know them.
**$A_2$:** I copy them. [then, speaking of the word "this"] I don't really know, but I can copy it.
**$A_3$:** I spell it. [Sounds T-H-I-S, but cannot pronounce the word without help.]
**Q:** Does spelling always help you?
**A:** No, not if I get T and H together.

And finally, an interview with Tommy:

**T:** I'll write all the letters. [Writes e, i, b, p, q.]
**I:** Are these words?
**T:** No, not words. I'll start with "come."

I: Is "come" a word?
T: Yes. [Writes "og."]
I: Is that a word?
T: No. I'll make it into a word. [Adds "y." Tries to sound "ogy."] It's not a word in my reading book but it's a word I know.
I: What are words made of?
T: [doubtfully] Words. . . . [later] I'll write some numbers and then some letters. [Writes the numerals 1 to 11.] [later, writing "Mitten"] It's got to have a capital 'cause it's the beginning of a word.
I: All words?
T: Yes, except "milk."

But Andrew said something different:

A: You put capitals at the beginning of a word.
I: All words?
A: No, not all. They're for an adult's book.
I: More than a child's book?
A: Yes, I think so. Bigger people can read bigger words.

Thus the child speculates about what he is learning. Thus he communicates with himself—not just about learning to read. One day, five or ten years on, he may still be writing "egog": his writing may be "directionless"; or in another twenty years he may be writing to the *Times* complaining of the corrupting influences at work in his mother tongue. And the time comes when he writes:

At the picnic
A butterfly
Settles on the cheese.

This day comes and goes, when, in the words of Judith Wright, the Australian poet, "the timeless thing is seen and isolated in its brief timelessness." For instance,

The crystals of copper sulphate are as beautiful as jewels—only they are not precious. They break and chip easily and dissolve in water, unfortunately.

But, the day comes when the cat who sits on the mat demands:

After I had breakfast, I came to school and played in the playground.

and

20 cc. of distilled water were placed in the beaker.

There is no longer an audience. These latter children are writing for nobody, not even themselves. Once they had unselfconsciously experimented with many of the varieties within Standard English. In the flow of their discourse they themselves were revealed. Infinite choice was available. But how can the teacher grade the growing imagination out of ten? Or the startling creativity? And the diversity of subject matter that natural curiosity uncovers?

It is not possible.

But spelling can be marked, and punctuation can be marked, and response to the set subject can be marked, and the grades can be worked out.

They have had their time for "play," and they are taken to see the Monolith who speaks in the dead language of speeches and who cuts them adrift from their intuitions. Now they are confronted with all the trivia within the standard language and are directed into menial levels of performance.

They need to be taught this. This is what the language teachers complain that their children do not know. And where once one might have said that the children's mastery of the language increased as they used it in an environment of tolerance, now the picture is different. Now they get things right or wrong. They make mistakes and are judged by these more frequently than by their achievements. And a mistake, in terms laid down by the Monolith, is that which is unacceptable. The scale has two calibrations. At one end is CORRECT, and at the other, INCORRECT.

School is like a picture
Where everything is Black
Because it is work.

This slipped out in a child's notebook two months ago. He had a tolerant teacher who knew mistakes for what they are. He knew that all human learning is accompanied by imperfect performances. He was concerned with the achieve-

ment of his class, with their increasing mastery of the tasks they set themselves and those they undertook in the context of the classroom. They had confidence. They worked with ease, authority, and pleasure. Nor were they uncritical each of his own work, having an awareness of the satisfaction achieved in one piece of work, the dissatisfaction of another piece which failed.

How might such a teacher interpret the term "mistake"? Perhaps he would do it like this if he thought about it at all:

A mistake is

1. that which is communicated inadequately, ineffectively to the audience for whom it was intended.

2. that which is accidental and unintentional and part of the writer's occupational hazard. He needs a proofreader to help with the presentation of public utterances, even at five years of age.

3. that which arises because of imperfect mastery of a learning process; this is not put right by marking him wrong, but only by giving him confidence to practice and assimilate from mature utterances produced around him. The meaning of what he speaks or writes may well not be impaired by such "mistakes."

4. that which arises from misunderstanding or confusion and from inadequate teaching.

Such a teacher will not pour science "into the mind," as James Harris remarked, "like water into a cistern, that passively waits to receive all that comes." And it is he who is likely to mediate between the children he teaches and the society that charges him to do so. But of many teachers this is not so. And few are wholly able to resist the social pressure inside and outside the school that "contrives to blunt the main tool of learning."

## V. EXPLICIT TEACHING OF LANGUAGE CONCEPTS

Certainly the teacher's concern with language and

thought must include attitudes and appreciations as well as skills and powers. Delight in language and desire to use it are indispensable bases for instruction seeking to increase power and proficiency with language. It follows, then, that a wide variety of opportunities for *using* language must be devised by the teacher or must emerge spontaneously from the interests and life of the classroom. So far we are all in agreement.

But these opportunities for using language are not sufficient to provide for pupils optimum growth in their language powers. Attention to content and interest needs to be accompanied by a more systematic attention to how a thing is said or written. For *economical* learning, goals are needed, and these goals should not be only in the mind of the teacher. The pupil, also, must become aware of targets. In the early years of schooling, these targets are usually relatively unconscious, but increasingly they should become explicit. Both pupils and teacher participate in identifying goals, some of which would otherwise be submerged in the complexity of language activities. Pupils need to gauge their success in language by reference to a goal, adapting their future response in the light of such evaluation. The process is one of establishing goals—goals that the child sets or accepts—then evaluating success, and adapting subsequent behaviors. Selecting and learning the behaviors that lead to success with goals can be made more economical by teacher guidance, good models, and motivated practice. The teacher, of course, needs to know, both from research and from the accumulation of teachers' reported experiences, the pertinent evidence about maturation and child development in order to avoid wasteful introduction of goals either much too early or much too late.

### Some Examples

**a.** With pupils aged 9 or 10 the teacher shows a film about an organ grinder and his monkey; the pupils talk about the film; then the teacher writes the words of a sentence, each

word on a separate placard. The sentence might be one like this:

> However, in the foggy evenings, sometimes the monkey merely clung to the hand organ, shivering and whimpering while he ate his rəisins.

The individual word placards are given to 22 pupils in the classroom. Those pupils who have just received placards go to the front of the room, stand in any random order, each displaying his card. The remaining pupils help the teacher rearrange the placard holders to create a meaningful English sentence. The first concept to be noted: In our language the order of the words in a sentence is important for meaning.

Other arrangements are experimented with; the uses of pitch and stress are examined (juncture can be used later with two or more sentences). Pupils conclude that word arrangement in sentences is flexible, that different arrangements and variations in pitch and stress modify or mar meaning, sometimes subtly, sometimes remarkably. Further extensions and linguistic conclusions are possible. Followup can consist of stacks of small cards at the pupil's desk. He creates sentences, devises ways to alter them, copies his best sentences on paper, recites on what he has noticed about the ways language behaves.

**b.** In the first grade (age 6) the children begin a story told to the teacher: *The milkman came.* The teacher writes these three words on separate cards; one child suspends them on a clothesline, using brightly colored clothespins. Using a system (when? where? how? why?), the teacher helps them do "sentence-stretching," and their "word line" looks like this:

> This morning the milkman came to my house walking quietly to bring us eggs and cream.

Purpose: the children learn—not yet at the conscious level—how modifying is done. At the conscious level they learn that telling more about something can be done in one surge of communication (rather than a series of short surges)

and that to do so is often more interesting to others. Sister Mary Theodore Bolsen reports in *The Instructor* for March 1966 that by the *second* grade, pupils taught in this manner write longer and better-constructed sentences than those not so trained. As James Moffett points out: "A teacher listening to a student speak, or reading his theme, may never know whether he produces baby sentences because his perceptions and conceptions are crude or because he can't transform sentences. The best policy in any case is to enlarge the student's repertory of sentence structures."[1]

## VI. A. THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE, IMPLICIT AND EXPLICIT

We are agreed that the teacher needs to be equipped with sound knowledge about language. In his everyday dealings with his pupils' speech and writing and with the books they read, he continually makes assumptions about the nature of language and the way it works. These assumptions influence his pupils' ways of thinking about language, and the assumptions ought therefore to be as truthful as the teacher can make them.

Should any of this knowledge be taught, explicitly, to children, and if so at what stages?

The issues here need clarifying. In the United Kingdom the debate ranges mainly over grammar (morphology and syntax). In the past the main motive for explicit teaching of topics drawn from these levels of linguistic analysis to children between the ages of 8 to 15 has been a desire to alter or improve the structural patterns of the pupils' writing. A similar motivation can be detected in some United States programs for introducing modern linguistics into the classroom; the Nebraska Curriculum Development Center's Teacher Packet "Language Explorations for Elementary Grades" suggests that the function of such teaching is to give the children some tools for expanding their repertory of linguistic resources or for using consciously

and in composition the repertory they already command.

But at the age when they enter our schools, children have already formed most (if not all) of the intuitive generalizations about the structure of their mother tongue which enable them to use it productively. There is little room for expanding their repertory of linguistic resources at the *structural* level; and since they have already learned so much intuitively simply by using language (as listener and speaker) in situational contexts, it seems probable they will learn the remainder just as efficiently by the same means as they would by deliberate and conscious instruction.

After all, the effective use of our native language depends, normally, on its patterns having become so fully internalized that we are unconscious of them. The idea that it is helpful, during the act of communication, for a writer or speaker to think consciously about the repertory of structures available to him is a dangerous fallacy. What the writer needs to attend to is the content of what he has to say, its purpose, its effect on his audience. This should lead us to place very low in our hierarchy of priorities the aim of making conscious the structural generalizations which children are already able to operate intuitively.

Moreover, any systematic study of language at the grammatical levels calls for a degree of abstractness in one's thinking that children are seldom capable of attaining much before the age of 15 or 16. (Piagetian researches into concept formation are highly relevant here.)

Much more to the point, in the school situation, would be a study of language at the "context of situation" level. The basic procedure here would be to examine a variety of "texts" (both spoken and written) in relation to the contexts of situation in which they occur, observing the different functions which language can serve, and the features associated on the one hand with particular types of user (dialect) and on the other hand with particular kinds of use (register). Among the topics which would arise naturally in the course of this observation would be

the relation of speech to writing, ideas about "correctness," the nature of a dictionary. One foreseeable difficulty is that study at this "context of situation" level necessarily involves reference to the more abstract levels of syntax, morphology, and phonology. It is not necessary however that the pupil should learn in detail the systems which are describable at these more abstract levels.

> An analogy with the teaching of biology may have some point here. At one time the pupil learning biology was expected to commit to memory a great deal of information about, at one level, the structure and functioning of tissues and organs, at another level the type system. The more modern trend is to focus on the living organism in its environment, illuminating this study where necessary by reference to particular tissues or organs, or by a selective "dipping-into" the type-system which enables the pupil to understand the system and to use it, without actually "knowing" it in the older sense. It seems tc me that similarly our linguistic studies in the sixth form should focus on language functioning in the human environment, illuminating this where necessary by a "dipping-into" the more abstract levels of syntax, morphology and phonology, which would enable the student to understand the nature and interrelationship of these levels and to find his way around them, without actually "knowing" the systems in detail.[2]

It seems clear that there is a strong case for compulsory study of this kind within any English course which is a specialist option; in the United Kingdom it would thus become obligatory for sixth formers who choose English as one of their specialisms.

Ought it not also to form part of the general education in English of all pupils who are capable of understanding it? The arguments for this would be:

a) That such study corresponds more closely than any other to the kind of interest which adolescents already show in language.
b) That it concentrates on those areas where conscious knowledge is most likely to be utilizable in the pupil's productive use of language.

Quite possibly a majority of our pupils aged 15 or 16 or

above could profit from work of this kind. It would be valuable to introduce development programs (or "field trials") in both our countries to test this out in practice.

## VI. B. THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE, IMPLICIT AND EXPLICIT

Linguists and teachers of English in general would probably agree with Frank Whitehead's opening statement concerning the importance of the teacher's knowledge about the language and how his knowledge, assumptions, and attitudes may "influence his pupils' ways of thinking about language." But a major difference arises between Mr. Whitehead's answer to his basic question and how some linguists and teachers, particularly many in the United States, would answer the question "Should any of this knowledge be taught, explicitly, to children, and if so at what stages?"

In the United States, many linguists and teachers in elementary and secondary schools believe that what pupils learn about the nature and development of the English language, based upon the best available scholarship, has value in and of itself. To this end, these teachers—mainly those in junior and senior high schools—present explicitly and systematically appropriate elements of English sentences and longer discourses, usage, and semantics. They also take up matters of language incidentally, of course, when the subject is relevant to other aspects of their teaching. The pacing of this instruction depends largely upon local circumstances, particularly the teacher's judgment of what is suitable for a particular class or pupil.

One important purpose of helping a pupil to identify patterns, structure, and usage is to assist him in seeing a range of linguistic choices open to him, several of which may not have occurred to him as he was trying to express himself. Then he can also be helped to see the consequences of his choices. Some teachers also hope that as they improve their teaching skills and materials, they may be able to help the pupil improve his ability to express himself more

effectively. But this relationship between this kind of knowledge about language and ability to use the language has not yet been fully established by research.

The following general statements (taken from the State of Wisconsin guide) are chosen to illustrate what kinds of attitudes toward language and knowledge about it might be included in an English language program in grades K-12.[3]

THE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAM

The English language program is designed with a twofold purpose:

To increase students' intellectual curiosity about language in general and the English language in particular, and to give them some understanding of the structure and vocabulary of the English language and the way it functions in society. . . .

To achieve this purpose, the inductive, or discovery, approach is suggested throughout this program.

To help students use the English language more effectively.

Though grammar plays the major role in the language curriculum, many other aspects of language are included: usage, the study of words, and something of the history of the language; however, these subjects will not constitute major units.

The study of grammar, which will focus on the construction of sentences, will emphasize the systematic nature of the language. . . . (p. 338)

. . . . . .

A. Sample exercises in seventh grade: learn to identify kernel sentence patterns and gain some skill in expanding each of them.
B. Sample practice exercises in eighth grade: pupils write their own sentences containing relative clauses and then practice applying the "deletion transformation" as a means of reducing predication.
C. Sample exercises in the ninth grade: pupils identify parts of speech by applying the four signals: word forms, word order, function words, and stress.

. . . . . .

THE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAM

To a large degree the senior high language program should build upon concepts and skills learned and practiced in the ele-

mentary and junior high school grades. General objectives would include such matters as:

> Achieving greater sophistication in syntactical structuring and manipulation commensurate with the varying abilities of high school students and different grade levels.
>
> Broadening of word facility, i.e., conscious study of vocabulary....
>
> Studying the powers of a word or of words in particular juxtaposition, in special and purposeful contexts.
>
> Becoming aware of dialectal differences, both social and geographical, and the semantic and historical reasons behind these differences.
>
> Studying the historical development of the English language in greater depth and in broader perspective.

It is during the senior high school years that the greatest interplay, transfer, or correlation between language and composition, and language and literary interpretation should occur. (p. 397)

. . . . . .

> Sample exercises: The teacher can extend pupils' understanding of the possibilities of using subordination by employing such transformational processes as relative clauses, participial phrases, prepositional phrases, appositives, sentence modifiers, and absolute constructions. Pupils' awareness can be developed inductively by having them examine many excerpts taken from their themes and from literature.

Such illustrations can give only a fragmentary, perhaps distorted, notion of what a systematic program for the teaching of language might include. Some of the university curriculum centers and an increasing number of school districts throughout the United States are developing organized programs for the teaching of language, particularly in junior and senior high schools. Scholars and teachers are collaborating on these projects. They do so because they believe that since language is an important part of human life, a study of it is culturally desirable.

## VII. LINGUISTICS FOR THE ENGLISH TEACHER

The minimum linguistic competence required of an En-

glish teacher must be sufficient knowledge—

a) to assess continuously the role of direct teaching of linguistics in the classroom;
b) to be able to express, directly, or by implication, views about the nature of language and the structure of English which accord with the best scholarship available;
c) to counterbalance the effects of his own learning of English;
d) to guarantee the native speaker that the linguistic theory and system which will be used on or near him will be as self-consistent and comprehensive as possible.

Nothing short of a proper professional training in linguistics will suffice. No case is made here for specialized English language teachers. Every English teacher needs to learn about the present state of linguistics. Every teacher needs to be able to follow developments in theory and description throughout his teaching career.

**Notes**

1. Quoted from a working paper which was later published as James Moffett, *Drama: What Is Happening* (Champaign, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1967).
2. Frank Whitehead, *The Disappearing Dais*: A Study of the Principles and Practice of English Teaching (London: Chatto & Windus Ltd., 1966), p. 229n.
3. *English Language Arts in Wisconsin*: Wisconsin English Language Arts Curriculum Project, Robert C. Pooley, Director (Madison, Wis.: Department of Public Instruction, 1968), pp. 338-440. Excerpts used by permission.